Week ending August 22 1953
Every Wednesday Fourpence

JOHN BULL

Sunderland goes on a football spending spree

Carroll Levis scours Britain for new stars

"You know, Johnny, it really beats me how those R.A.F. chaps keep it up . . ."

"Mr. Steel," said Johnny Morgan, clapper boy, "have a . . ."

". . . hour after hour. They never seem to stop. You'd think they'd done enough flying in the last few months to satisfy anyone."

"I say, d'you really want that cigarette or . . ."

"I mean, don't they ever want to relax, to take time off . . ."

"To enjoy a Capstan?"

"Exactly. To put their feet up and have a really good smoke. I know I would."

"Would what, Mr. Steel?"

"Like a Capstan—wouldn't I just!"

"But you've just taken one."

"Well, what d'you know — so I have! Thanks, Johnny."

"All I do know is that I've been waiting to give you a light for the last five minutes."

"Well, Johnny, you shouldn't talk so much."

• • •

"THE MALTA STORY"

(a J. Arthur Rank Organisation release)

A strong, emotional drama which pays tribute to the wartime heroism of the men and women who defended the George Cross island.

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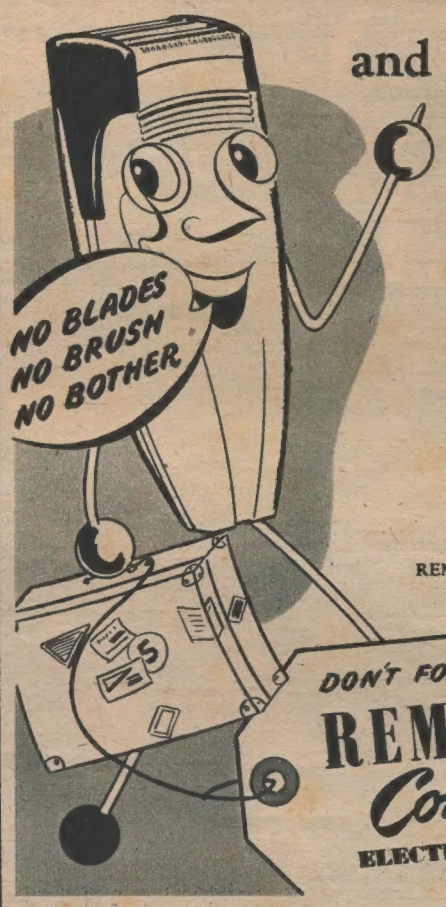

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For the Perfectionist, ask for Remington Pre-Shave and After-Shave Lotions and Powder Stick.

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Contour 6
ELECTRIC DRY SHAVER

SIGNS OF
DRY SCALP

Hair that's hard to comb, won't stay in place, that's dull and lifeless or flecked with dandruff in the parting or on the collar—he needs 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic!

Don't neglect scruffy hair—

IT'S A SIGN OF

DRY SCALP

IF YOUR HAIR IS HARD TO COMB, unruly, flecked with dandruff, don't neglect it. It looks scruffy, and, what's more, it probably means you have Dry Scalp.

It's easy to end Dry Scalp with 'Vaseline' Brand Hair Tonic. Just gently massage in a few drops for 20 seconds every morning, moving the whole scalp with your fingers. You'll notice a real difference almost immediately. Your scalp will feel really healthy, your hair will look glossy and well-cared-for, and will stay tidy all day.

'Vaseline' Hair Tonic costs 2/6, or 3/9 for a double-size bottle—and it's most economical in use. So try some today—you'll be glad you did!

What a difference a daily massage with a few drops of 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic makes! Hair looks better and scalp feels better, too. He's really smart now with healthy, glossy hair.

Vaseline* HAIR TONIC

THE DRESSING THAT ENDS DRY SCALP

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EDITORIAL

Dead slow

As the traffic jams pile up and the throbbing motor ticks away precious petrol, drivers and passengers have plenty of time to think about the enormous waste of time, fuel and money that our inadequate roads force on us.

The Director of Road Research of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Mr. W. H. Glanville, says: "A study of a single road, Oxford Street in London, revealed that during working hours 400,000 vehicle hours a year and 2,500,000 man hours are spent in negotiating traffic lights.

"In Central London the average journey speed is only 11 m.p.h. In Glasgow it is under 8 m.p.h."

LONDON'S delays alone are estimated to cost at least £70 million a year. And all over the country, cars are endlessly queueing. Every month another 40,000 new vehicles go on the roads, and there are now five million. Far fewer cars go out of service, so the queues grow longer.

MR. GLANVILLE
Trouble in Oxford Street . . .

Urgent jobs to get the wheels rolling more freely include a Forth Road Bridge for Scotland and a Tamar Road Bridge for Plymouth—where there are daily mile-long lines of cars for the ferry.

By-passes for dozens of bottlenecks on the trunk roads, such as at St. Albans, Staines and Doncaster should be got under way.

Every large town has roads that need widening, black spots calling for swifter traffic control, and empty spaces which could be adapted for *free* parking off the main road.

THE L.C.C.'s County Plan calls for widening sixty-two miles of road to take four or six traffic lanes and altering ninety road intersections. This would cost £300 million, which sounds a great deal, but is only the equivalent of about four years' present congestion.

To find the money, the motoring organizations suggest a road loan secured on the annual revenue from motor taxation.

They say: "Official references to the government's inability to find the necessary money for new roads are too numerous to mention."

Long-term plans are needed, too. Two-level streets, one for through traffic and the other for local traffic, as in Los Angeles, are a good idea.

URGENCY is the key. Otherwise, we will discover at some rush-hour that all the main roads from one end of Britain to the other are blocked solid with stationary cars.

Then we'll have to get out of the cars and buses and start building new roads on top of them!

THIS WEEK'S COVER

BILL MORDEN is very much a handyman, and has laid crazy paving in his old home in Australia, as well as at Bromley, Kent, where he lives today. His five-year-old daughter Carol modelled for the girl in the painting and also, by way of an old snapshot, for the happy little boy in the background. "But the man in the picture is putting up with far too much," Morden declares. "When I'm doing a job, would-be helpers keep off."

still more and more people are using

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TOOTHPASTE

Because Euthymol does more than just clean your teeth; it protects gum tissues, destroys bacteria that cause decay and mouth odours; it is a *complete toothpaste* that safeguards your *whole mouth.* Ask your Chemist's opinion of Euthymol

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SEE *what's Cooking!*

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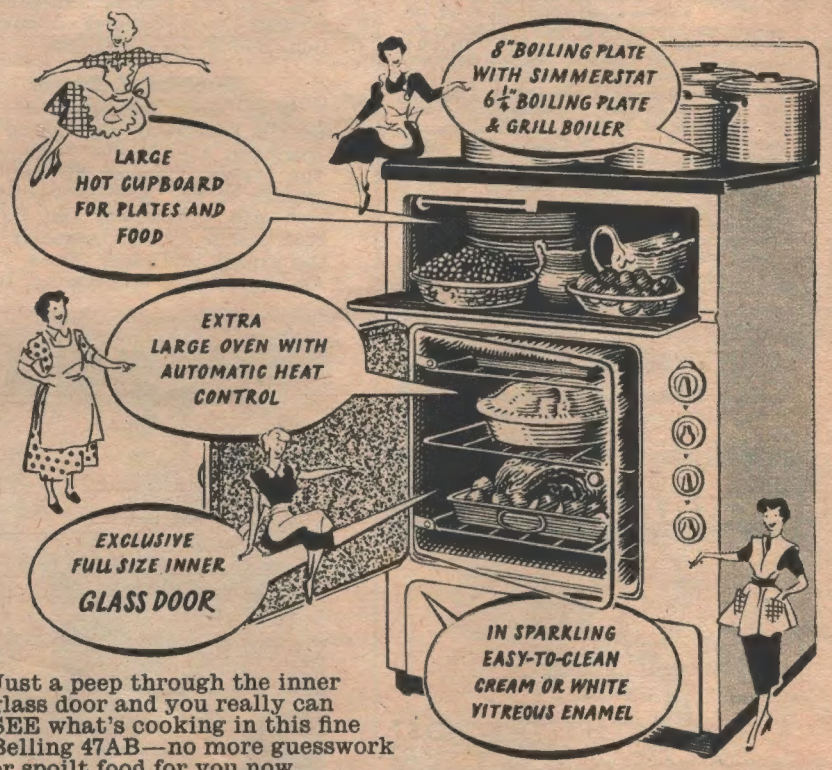
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LARGE HOT CUPBOARD FOR PLATES AND FOOD
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Obtainable from your usual supplier, in quart-size flagons.

By Appointment Cyder Makers to
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FROM CHEMISTS ONLY

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FREE SPEECH

Family home gives up its treasures

FOR YEARS, I PERSUADED my parents to get rid of the antique pictures and knick-knacks that cluttered the house. Yet now that I am married, with a house of my own, I find that my sense of values has changed.

Every time I visit my parents, I come back with my car packed with pictures and ornaments. To me, the attic is now a treasure-house. A charming little flower painting, set in a wide, polished frame, hangs in our bedroom. A Victorian Staffordshire dog sits on the mantelpiece. A pair of Edwardian silver candlesticks decorates a walnut occasional table. A painting of my great-great-grandfather, which lay in cobwebs for thirty years, is the main feature of our hall. I wonder how our modern ornaments and furniture will appeal to our children when they grow up.—N. F. H., Basingstoke, Hants.

Weight Inspection

UNFORTUNATELY, only a few towns or areas grant inspectors of weights and measures the right to check the accuracy of personal weighing machines ("Free Speech," July 25). Special local Acts of Parliament have to be passed for the purpose. All other weighing machines used for trade are, of course, inspected at least once, and often twice or more, each year.—L. C. PORTER, Institute of Weights and Measures Administration, Bootle, Liverpool, 20.

Shetland Saga

I WAS most interested in JOHN BULL'S account of the fishing boat attack on the Tirpitz ("Above Us The Waves," August 8), for, as a member of the Shetland Special Service base, I fitted-out Leif Larsen's boat Arthur for this operation. For this exploit, and many others, Larsen was awarded a selection of British

Larsen (centre, foreground) on board Arthur during a wartime trip to Norway

decorations which no one else—British or foreign—has ever achieved. He holds the D.S.O., D.S.C., C.G.M., and D.S.M. and bar, and after the war became one of Norway's most celebrated heroes. But fame has left him quite unchanged. A few months ago, when I flew to Norway, he met me at the airport. After the war, he married the widow of a shipmate who was lost from the Arthur in a gale, and he now has five children. I was delighted to find him the same simple soul I remembered from our four years together in Shetland.—DAVID HOWARTH, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent.

The unit to which Leif Larsen and David Howarth belonged was based at Lunna, in the Shetlands. Using Norwegian fishing boats, it ran the gauntlet of German aircraft and coast patrols, delivering arms and equipment to Norwegian resistance forces, and bringing refugees back to Britain. The full story of Larsen's wartime adventures is told by Howarth in his book "The Shetland Bus," published by Nelson and Sons in 1951. This week's instalment of "Above Us The Waves" begins on page 16.

The Three Rs

JOHN BULL'S fair-minded Editorial on the three Rs (July 25) will be appreciated by many teachers who wish they could enjoy the same advantages as the army's teachers. As teachers in a primary school, we wonder what the results would be if army teachers had to contend with classes of more than forty or fifty restless pupils.—W. M. JOBBINS, E. FROST, B. COATES, O. J. COOPER, D. PETERS, D. L. ROBINSON, J. L. HILL, D. NEWTON, S. R. JEFFS, Croydon, Surrey.

. . . The three Rs have no *immediate* value to the backward child, while the illiterate serviceman realizes that he is missing something. When I served in an army education centre, we taught men to read and count by dealing with vital things of everyday life. We played darts, read newspapers, filled in betting slips. The men were keen, and we could force slackers to try. — SCHOOLMASTER, Glamorganshire.

. . . The figures on illiteracy used in your Editorial were compiled in 1947, after years of war, evacuation, and closed schools. No figures have been published since then, so dogmatic statements about illiteracy today must be without foundation.—HEADMASTER, Ilford, Essex.

. . . Teachers have to face the fact that modern children have no incentive to read. We listen to our news on the radio, see it at the cinema and on TV.—H. S. G., Cheltenham.

Not A Crackle

NEXT door to my house is a garage, with cars moving in and out most of the day. Yet I can assure M. M. L. ("Free Speech," August 1) that although many of these cars are not suppressed, I get little interference on my television set. It is fitted with an interference limiter. With careful placing of the aerial, this gives a clear picture, with only slight loss of signal strength.—J. N. COOK, Leinster Avenue, London, S.W.14.

"These limiters can be quite effective," agrees a radio expert. "But to stop interference altogether, it must be tackled at the source."

Safer Cycling

I AM always warning my children about the dangers of the road, yet while my seven-year-old son was riding a "junior" bicycle along the footpath, a woman told him that he should ride on the road. He took her advice, and now I have to scold him for it, as I feel it is most dangerous. Is there a law on this?—EDNA J. SPEDDING, Quinton, Birmingham.

Although, legally, no cyclist may ride on the pavement, police make an exception for small children. "In the interests of road safety, we prefer to see them on the pavement," say Nottingham police. "We are sure most police forces feel the same."

Sealed And Delivered

MY doctor recently examined me, then handed me a sealed envelope, and told me to attend the local hospital. There, I sat in a waiting room with other adults. All held their envelopes—like children delivering messages. The hospital doctor examined me, scribbled another note, sealed it in an envelope, and asked me to give it to my doctor. I still don't know what it's about, but there's nothing more worrying to a patient than carrying these secret messages around.—J. H., Chiswick, London.

"This protects the patient from himself," explains a doctor. "Some people might worry at medical terms. We seal all envelopes, whatever the message, otherwise a sealed envelope would automatically be taken as concealing bad news. Of course, a patient sometimes steams open an envelope. If he reads that he's got 'oscillating plumbism,' it means he's swinging the lead."

Graceless Nation?

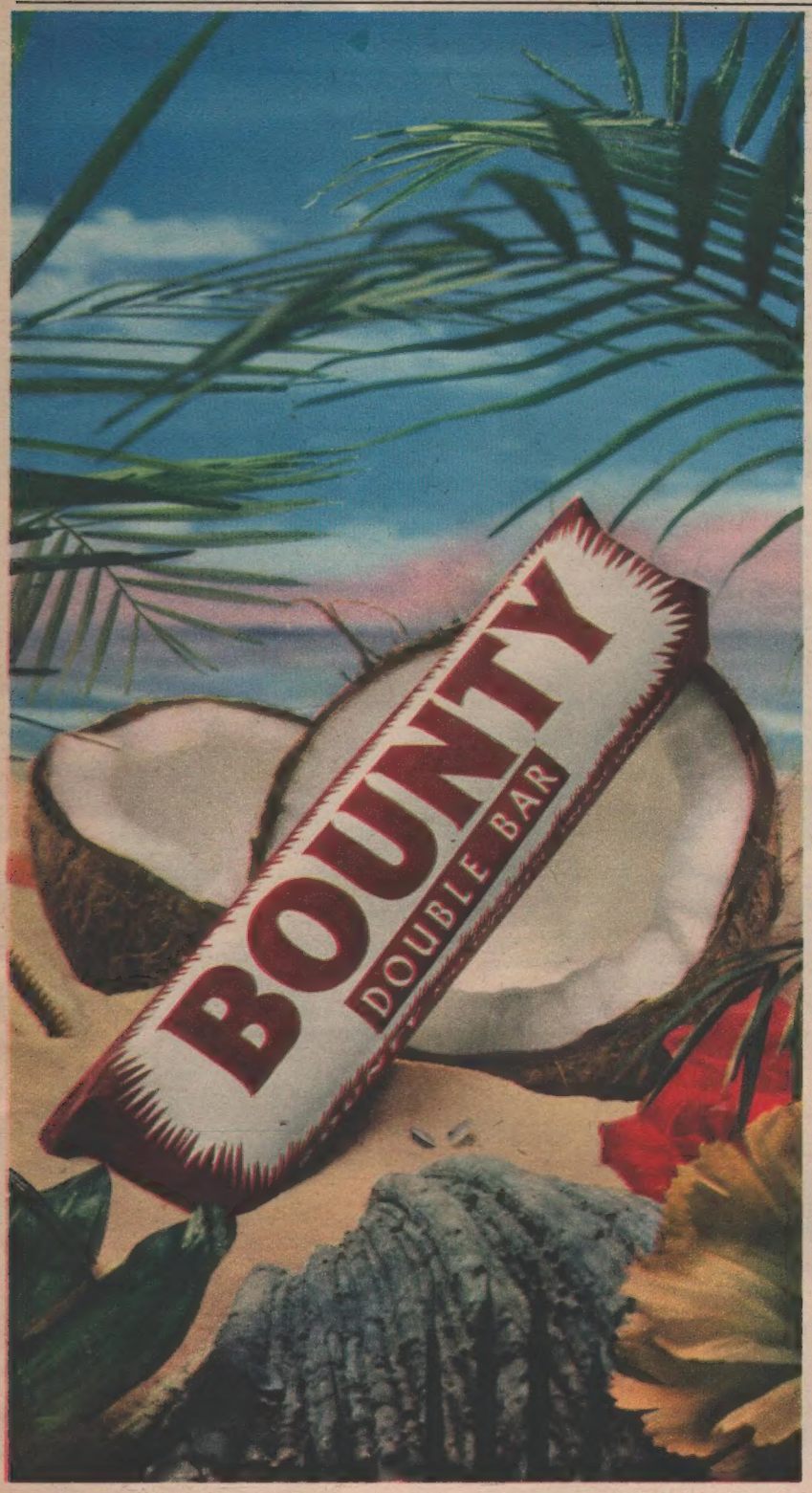
I ASKED a youngster I know if he said grace before meals. "No, I don't," he replied. "Why do you ask?" and looked most surprised. Surely, if we claim to be a Christian people we should keep up this simple act of faith. When I was a boy, we sang grace at table, my mother and sister taking soprano; my father, bass; my brother, tenor, and myself, alto. We never hurried it, however hungry we were.—G. E. M., Wolverhampton.

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

TESSIE O'SHEA

The girl who loves to be fat

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.



There's South Sea Island magic in this

New Chocolate Thrill!

Here's something new and oh! how wonderful! Here's Bounty, an extra-special chocolate coconut bar!

Just taste that coconut!
Smoother, richer, creamier than you ever knew coconut could be!

Just taste that chocolate!
Thick rich full-cream milk chocolate — just the way you love it!

Treat yourself to a Bounty at your sweetshop today!

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Two big chunky bars for 6d.

ANOTHER SWEET TREAT BY MARS

O Pipers, peers, policemen
(all the Commonwealth)
Cheer for juicy Outspan—
Oranges for health!

for Orange

O Waiting for something? Spectating — or something? Wherever there's a crowd, people are enjoying everybody's favourite treat — delicious, juicy, thin-skinned, full-of-sunshine Outspan Oranges! And luscious, tangy Outspan Grapefruit for breakfast make even a Monday seem fun-day! Outspan Oranges and Grapefruit are lovely to eat and *good* for you!

for Outspan

You can buy wonderful Outspans wherever you see this sign.

The golden fruit from sunny South Africa

3,000,000 tingling-fresh mouths this morning with

NEW "TINGLING-FRESH" S.R.!

3,000,000 TINGLING GUMS!

Every morning more and more people feel that wonderful tingle new SR gives their gums! A tingle that means health as well as freshness. For brushing with SR stimulates the gums to resist gum infections.

3,000,000 DAZZLING SMILES!

White, sparkling teeth—and SR helps keep them safe too in healthy gums. SR stands for Sodium Ricinoleate, the actual substance dentists use for the gums.

3,000,000 PURE-SWEET MOUTHS!

Ice-fresh for a fresh mouth! Tingling-fresh! That's SR's new flavour! It makes your breath sweet and pure, sets your whole mouth tingling with freshness!

Gibbs S.R. keeps mouth fresh and gums healthy

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JOURNEY INTO BRITAIN: Harry Hopkins reports from LIVERPOOL

A SEAPORT FIGHTS THE SPECTRE OF ITS RIP-ROARING PAST

Through the years, a cosmopolitan human tide swept in to share the wealth of an empire-building city. It left a legacy which is the burden of the Scouser of today

FROM THE TOPMOST STEPS of the Picton Library on St. George's Plateau, Liverpool falls away like the heroic city of a vision. Below, white and luminous and faintly mysterious as the traffic swirls about it, lies the entrance to that twentieth-century wonder, the Mersey Tunnel. At night, with its glass ticket booths lighted, and its up-turned lamps shining up into the sky from their tall, slender columns, the tunnel mouth beckons like the Gateway to the Future.

And then, far away, above the tops of the tall office buildings as they drop away towards the river, over the green buses and the tram-cars and the hurrying clerks and typists, can be discerned, silhouetted against the sky, the out-stretched wings of the Liver birds, wire-pinioned, yet soaring. A city of merchant venturers, a city to lift the heart and quicken the pulse? Yes—as long as you stay on the steps.

Descend, and you find a city overtaken by a creeping shabbiness, overgrown by a fungus of decay, a city whose heart has grown cold and whose hands are clammy, a city which has more broken windows stuffed with dirty paper than any other city in England.

The city of merchant venturers is also the home of the Scousers. It is a city with many surprises. From the sooty Corinthian columns of St. George's Hall ("one of the finest edifices in the world"), turn right, and almost at once you are adrift in the endless desolation of the Scotland Road. Or, instead, carry on straight before you, plunging into the dark, damp canyons that run downhill towards the river, walled in by grime-covered office buildings, high and characterless, each named, bleakly, the "So-and-so Building." Doorways are thickly clustered with brass plates, rubbed so hard and so long by generations of polishing office boys that their names are almost worn away. Black cinder patches gape where Goering's bombers dropped in.

John Bull Photographs by Arthur Whittington

The green trams and buses, as they roll down from the farther heights, run along the ridge over which the city is built, and plunge into these dark commercial canyons, bear on their fronts the two words: PIER HEAD. In Liverpool, all roads lead to the waterfront.

Emerging at last, the trams and buses swing round into the vast open space behind the river wall—and Liverpool springs one of its

Luminous city of a vision—Liverpool from the Picton Library. To the right is the Mersey tunnel. In the far distance shines the Liver building clock

Mersey pilot Nelson Drew surveys a Liverpool which, for him, begins at a ship's ladder off the Anglesey coast. He takes the vessel through twelve miles of channel, into the city's docks

Morning and night, the commuting hundreds crowd the bustling ferries which criss-cross the river. In spite of the famous tunnel, these odd-looking craft still weld Merseyside together

better surprises. Suddenly, the dull and dreary city leaps to life. Cold the wind may be, but there is the tang of the ocean in it. Leaden the sky may be, but there is a sparkle of high adventure in the air. The vast landing stage—the biggest floating structure in the world, the guidebook assures us—moves gently beneath our feet in the tide. Ferryboats criss-cross the wide river, passing beneath the bows of ships that have come from the uttermost ends of the earth. Distant foghorns sound.

High in the sky on its lofty pedestal, the great Liver bird—bird that never was—lifts its green wings as if to soar over the Atlantic. Here is no longer the dreary city of the Scousers; no longer the city of hard-faced men whose hearts are in their counting houses. Here is one of the great cities of the world, Britain's first export port, the majestic ocean gateway through which have poured the products of Britain's industrial genius to set the wheels of the world turning.

First Glimpse Of Home

Beyond the ferries, packing in the homing office workers, the troopship Cheshire of the Bibby Line edges slowly into Princes Landing Stage, her rails lined with brown-faced veterans of Malaya's jungle war. For them this is the first glimpse of England in years; for Mersey pilot Nelson Drew, on the Cheshire's bridge, it is the beginning of the end of just one more job in the thousands checked off since, as a junior, he began to bring coasting schooners up the Mersey in the year 1910. The liner will still have to be nursed into its allotted dock through a lock—there is a thirty-foot rise and fall in the river at spring tides—but, just beyond, lies the cosy semi-detached house in the Allerton suburb that is this particular Liverpudlian's personal port.

Drew's Liverpool starts fifty-two miles from Scotland Road or Dale Street in a bucketing pilot boat, wallowing in the sea off Port Lynas, the lighthouse on Anglesey's north coast. It begins with a great ship hove to after days at sea, with a swaying pilot ladder up the wall-like side. It progresses through the twelve miles of shifting Mersey channel, the Askew Spit, the Crosby Bend, each stage with its tell-tale sounds and signs; plates of food eaten by torchlight on the bridge, salami and cheese on Scandinavian timber ships, curry and rice on the Indians, fresh meat on the Greek vessels (which generally carry a sheep or two on board), Russian ships with stiflingly overheated rooms and women as second officers. It is a Liverpool gay with house flags known all over the seven seas, professionally cosy with the freemasonry of river and berth, of the tug skippers, the harbour masters, the small boat men who handle the ropes, men in the service of ships.

Skill Serves The World

For forty-three years, this compact little man—you have to be agile to get up ship's ladders at sixty—has been taking the ships of the world up and down this great artery of trade and communication. Before him, in the days of piloting free enterprise, his grandfather ran one of the pilot boats, which—in between tending their oyster beds at Hoylake—would race out to the river mouth to offer incoming ships reliable guidance. Now, Drew's son, too, has got his "leadsman's bill," and, a third-class pilot, is one of the 150 pilots whose skill the Port of Liverpool places at the disposal of world shipping.

As the Cheshire ties up at the landing stage, the returning soldiers crowding the rails find themselves confronting Liverpool's famous waterfront trinity—the soaring Liver Building, scorned by the aesthetes, yet as perfect a trade-mark as the Tower Bridge, the four-square Cunard offices, and the cultured cupolas of the Dock Board, that powerful cabal of shipping lines, merchant princes and Government

Wallasey Corporation's newest ferry, the Royal Iris, boasts a dance hall—and a fish-and-chip shop. When Liverpool police raided the ship's bar, the captain "arrested" them until he docked

The markets serve many races. "Immigrants" and their descendants create a social problem

nominees that is almost the second government of Liverpool.

And behind this imposing front, strengthening the transatlantic note, the shabby pillars of the Overhead Railway—the world's first, preceding New York's—stringing together seven miles of docks on its rusty red thread.

There are two ways for a visitor to savour this city's true stature: from the top-deck of a Mersey ferryboat, or from one of the dingy, rattling coaches of the old Overhead. CANNING DOCK . . . HUSKISSON . . . CANADA . . . ALEXANDRA . . . GLADSTONE—the stations are dismal, but their names are a litany, echoing down the ghostly halls of the British century. Below, at their berths, the ships flash by: the red-and-white checked funnels of the Canadian Pacific; the blue funnels of the Holt Line, the biggest private shipping company left in the world; a tramp steamer piled with Burma teak; another discharging pineapples from Malaya. . . . *"Alight here for Peru, Ecuador, Chile and the West Coast of South America via the Panama Canal."*

From the riverside comes the sweet-sour odour of wet hides from the Argentine, thousands of them being unloaded from a lighter. In the new bulk sugar berth, raw sugar cascades into the big hoppers from a ship's holds, pours out again beneath into special aluminium trucks that will carry it to Tate and Lyle's big refinery. The first cube sugar was machine-made in Liverpool.

Wealth In Warehouses

Here are endless slab-sided warehouses, warehouses for tobacco, warehouses for wool, wine warehouses; vast cold stores for northern England's meat; old stone silos that were the first in Europe, modernistic concrete granaries that are among the most up-to-date.

The Harrow Hill, from Galveston, Texas, lies at the grain berth in Brunswick Dock, the remains of 9,300 tons of American maize in her holds. Like withered flower stalks, eight pipes—two sets of four—disappear through her open hatches, sucking up the grain with a sound like a hailstorm. Up it goes, on the final stage by elevator, to the top of the big white tower, 232 feet above the ground. And then the descent begins—through the hoppers, through the automatic weighing machines, along the speeding bands carrying two hundred tons an hour to the storage bins which run in long rows, 282 all told, through the length of the vast building.

As the plump orange corn speeds by, on its way in, tons of Iraqi barley are racing along on other belts, on their way out. Moving in its small, accompanying cloud of Iraqi dust—they store their grain in the ground in those parts—it proceeds by an intricate system of bands and chutes from floor to floor and building to building, until it finally pours out into the barge alongside waiting to carry it across the Mersey to a firm of cattle food compounders on the Birkenhead side. Liverpool feeds a large part of Britain's ten million cattle and twenty million sheep. As for our daily bread, Liverpool ranks second only in the world to Minneapolis-St. Paul as a flour-milling centre.

Long Journey For Grain

Jack Metcalfe, the granary foreman, puts out a hand and, letting it follow the swift flow of the conveyor belt, scoops up a handful of Iraqi barley, lifts it to his nose. It has a characteristic snuff-like smell.

This is storekeeping on the grand scale: 250,000 tons of grain pass through these two buildings in a year. Grain shipped from the Black Sea ports, from the Danube basin and the fertile fields of the Ukraine; grain from Australia and the Middle East; grain that starts its journey in some lonely farm silo in Manitoba, moves slowly across the great spaces of Canada, across the Great Lakes, down the St. Lawrence—to Jack Metcalfe's bins in Liverpool and the British housewife's larder.

A big part of Metcalfe's job is simply "finding room," a complicated mathematical exercise when grain is moving in and out all the time. Another part is watching over its condition. In a modern granary this has been made a good deal easier by a central cabin fitted with a long series of dials showing the temperature of the grain at twenty-feet intervals down each one hundred foot deep bin. High temperatures mean trouble—fermentation from some dampness in the grain or, perhaps, weevils.

"There was that lot of barley we had in July. It was best Australian malting barley, and looked just perfect when it arrived. But by November, you just had to touch it, and it collapsed into dust. You could scoop the weevils up by the bucketful. They came out from inside the grain when it was in the silo, and started to breed."

As we stood talking a workman casually threw an arm around a smooth metal pillar in front of us—and disappeared from view through a hole in the floor. The pillars and the holes, staggered, of course, run through the building from floor to floor. As a descent, they are faster and less trouble than taking the lift.

To the north, cranes rattle and concrete mixers growl as a new entrance lock, four times the present length, is constructed into the century-old Langton Dock, the latest modernization of the system. You can measure the progress of Liverpool, the expansion of the world, the forging of Empire, generation by generation, in the slow advance of Liverpool's docks down the Mersey, from the Old Dock, dug in the bed of the Pool in the reign of Queen Anne, the first commercial dock to be built in this island, with an estimated income of £600 a year, to the wonder of the 1850s, the Huskisson Docks, "formed to accommodate the largest class of paddle steamer of the new mail line, to be established between New York and Liverpool," and, at the northern limit of the docks' march, the bold Gladstone system, embarked on in the twenties, completing the twenty-nine miles of quays.

Bonds With Commonwealth

The biggest Cunarders have deserted to Southampton, taking their glamour with them; but Cunarders still sail from Huskisson, whence so many thousands of emigrants have set forth, in high hope, to build a new life in the New World. The bonds of Commonwealth are almost tangible along these crowded quays. In the Gladstone's northernmost branch, the Federal Line's Sussex, bound for New Zealand, is finishing loading. Bags of salt and sacks of mail swing across to the holds. Unstoved salt for making cheese and butter; salt for hides; rock salt for cattle licks—salt is a staple in outgoing cargoes to saltless New Zealand.

On the quayside the stage is being set. A high blue cattle transporter arrives from the port

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THE BLINDING DARKNESS

by **JOHN MASTERS**

ILLUSTRATED BY FANCETT

The pain behind his eyes was driving him mad, and making Mary's life a hell. Why shouldn't he end her suffering—and his own?

HE WAS IN ONE OF THEM when a warm and soft thing touched his bare forearm. He started convulsively, and heard her gasp: "Oh, Harry, I'm sorry. I forgot. . . . I didn't know you couldn't—that you had a spell. I didn't think. . . ." Her voice trailed off lamely; she took her hand away.

"Don't bother. It doesn't matter." He could have slashed his own throat for the way the words came out—cold, sarcastic and wounded; but he could not help it. He remembered the doctors had asked whether these cold inward rages had begun before or after the strokes of blindness. Or, rather, they had asked Mary . . . and she had answered that she could not say. Damned liar! She knew quite well his temper had been fraying away for three years past.

He waited. It, the night, would go soon; it always had, so far. Then he could take a long, slow breath, tighten his muscles and relax them. That would kill the quiverings in his knees and lower lip and round the back of his neck.

He thanked God with a silent, vicious blasphemy, that at any rate he was not mad: once he had thought he was, and so had Mary. Perhaps it would come in time—very likely. The sheer physical agony of the attacks and the mental spectre of blindness made him grip at that knowledge of his own saneness as a man grips at a lifebelt in a treacherous seaway.

After a minute the sun and the leaf colours returned, and he slowly lit a cigarette without altering his position or expression. His eyes had been open all the time, unseeing. He found they were focused too close, in a squint. Mary was looking at him out of the corner of her eye, he knew, but he did not move his head.

When he turned, she was still there where she had been when the night came, sitting on a rock beside him, a foot away, her chin in her hand. The blonde hair was pushed under the shapeless wide-brimmed felt sun hat, and she had a shiny nose. Why not? An Indian jungle at two o'clock on an April afternoon was hot enough to give any woman the right to a shiny nose. There were scratches on her bare arms, and earth and leaves clung to her khaki whipcord trousers.

She still looked aristocratic in spite of everything—damp forehead, scratches and dirt. If you didn't know her, you'd think she was cold, but not if you'd ever seen her playing with children—other people's children. Her neck flung up proudly from the open collar of her mannish, grey hunting-shirt. She swallowed and turned towards him, her blue eyes veiled, and said steadily: "Let's go back, dear. If you're feeling rotten, let's go back."

The venom bit into his voice again, though he knew it was coming and fought it all the way.

"No—I won't spoil your hunt. I can sit up all night for a leopard as comfortably as I can lie awake all night in the bungalow, can't I? We ought to be in the *machan* by three. The villagers are waiting. Go on—you lead."

She got up, slung her rifle, and walked on

His hair was greyer; that didn't surprise him. But his eyes—weren't they staring more? He knew very well why that was . . .

ahead of him. Poor devil, it was no joke for her, either. He had told her weeks ago, and she had seemed so much more tender; that was what made it unbearable. He had told her very soon after he found out himself. You cannot keep a thing like that secret for long; certainly not when you have screamed to her, in a panic, to bring candles, and she has been standing right there beside you, and all the lights on. Not when you have burned her face with a match, lighting her cigarette.

ANYWAY, he had wanted to tell her, to lean on her strength, because he loved her. She did not love him any more—had not for three years; a husband in love can always tell. But after he had told her she had behaved as if she did again, like it used to be.

She had almost fooled him—but charity stinks a mile away; he had climbed deeper into himself, and pulled the lid down on his fermenting miseries.

He remembered the first darkness very clearly. It was in the bungalow three months ago and he was pouring himself a beer after a long morning in the forests. The teak down in Sector 2 West needed thinning; he had engaged a new ranger: that was what he had been thinking about as the beer gurgled into the tankard. Then the lights went out.

He had waited a bit, wondering—fuse blown, perhaps—put the beer bottle down carefully, and started to move over to the fuse box.

After one step he knew that it was twelve noon, broad daylight, on a December day in the Central Provinces. A second ago the winter sunlight had been streaming through the windows in a warm, golden flood; it had glowed from the silver on the sideboard; he could *feel* it on him.

He groped his way to the sofa, sat down, and waited. There was no pain, no headache—just no light. After a minute, perhaps ten—he did not know, it seemed a long time—the yellow light struck his eyes again and warmed him all over so that he sweated. The pains in the head came later.

There had been plenty of times after that, and they came more often, but he was still able to do his work. After the match incident he had told Mary. She had been calm and wonderful—as always—and showed the real sympathy he had missed for three years. Damn her and damn all kindness. She had gone with him to the specialists in Bombay, and had tears in her eyes when she thought he was not looking; or were they only there when she thought he would see them?

WHAT had the doctors said? What had they not! *Brain tumour? Cancerous growth? Not sure . . . serious, my dear fellow, very . . . face facts, almost inoperable, may go on for years like this if no risks taken. . . . Oh, yes, we* can *operate, very slender chance.*

Once, three years ago, he would have told them to operate immediately, and gone in, tight-lipped, to fight for himself and his wife. But not now—he'd been fooled about himself and about her, and that was all over; no more heroics.

They had come away, he and Mary, back to his job as a forest officer at Pachmarhi. He felt better when he was out in the trees. He knew them, they were honest, there was no humbug about them. They were not kind, or cruel either.

What happened to a wife after she had been married happily for six years? But, of course, she never had been happy, just acting. And then she must have decided that acting was dishonest. She became different to him, but not to anyone else. Everybody said she was just the same; always the same calm, kind Mary. . . .

He looked up at her back again. Wisps of hair had escaped from under the felt hat and lay tangled across the nape of her neck. . . .

A sweet disorder in the dress
kindles in clothes a wantonness.

She's not a wanton, but I'm quite sure she likes young Charlie Manston better than she likes me—who doesn't?

That's all there was to it, all there ever would be while he was alive. Money, too; they hadn't

At the last, critical moment, Mary turned. She saw him standing in the middle of the path, hunched over the rifle. She rushed straight at him

any, and he worried about it. The Lord knew where it went. He didn't spend it, Mary didn't spend it, and the children didn't, because they had not got any children. They had both wanted a baby, but no baby came. Failure number one. Perhaps childlessness was the trouble; it often was, he had heard.

Anyway, put it all together, and it came to three years of bewildered unhappiness. Then the night had started coming to him, and she had been so loving and tender. . . .

At night, under the mosquito net, it had been hard to control himself, to stop himself from screaming. It was worse in the evenings on the veranda with the lights. When it came dark and visitors went on talking, and Mary sewed or knitted or turned the pages of her book—he listened desperately for all these sounds to know whether it was dark for them, too. He used to catch at her hand and try to look peacefully domestic. Once, he had to scream or die, and went out by himself into the jungle two miles down the gorge, and screamed and beat his hands on the rocks.

Shaving every morning, he could see his black hair turning greyer, visibly; that was all right—nothing very odd about that in a man of thirty-eight. But his eyes, his brown eyes—they looked the same, or were they staring more, the pupils more contracted? His face had been lean and sunburnt; now it was hollow, and under the sunburn there was a pallor, a greyness; and lines under the eyes, little etched lines coming finer and darker with every shaving. He knew what that was, and so did Mary—no sleep.

"Old Slowcoach," she used to call him, smiling; he with the slow laugh and the slow wits and the slow speech. He felt things, but couldn't say them, or show them easily. She was no quicksilver woman, come to that, but the words came easily to her musical voice, quiet words and fluent. The expressions came easily, too; controlled but genuine.

THAT was it—control. She burned up inside, but didn't give way to it. He hadn't her capacity for heights and depths—except that this thing had burrowed down and uncovered layers of feeling he didn't even know he possessed; layers of fear, and worse than fear.

A long pin pricked slowly at the inside of his head, and he stopped dead in his stride. That first terrible harbinger of agony. He braced his shoulders and walked on, waiting, trying to see back behind his eyes. Nothing more happened for thirty paces. He held his hands out in front of him and stared at them as he walked—all right, strong, not trembling. Mary turned and he put his hands down just in time.

She had been going to say something, point out a rare flower, perhaps. The flame-of-the-forest was nearly over, but here and there its brilliant scarlet splashed the jungle. She turned forward with a choked cough.

Must have seen me after all. Suppose I tell her everything? Suppose I touch her on the shoulder and say: "Mary, I have blind fits which oppress me so much that, later, they may drive me mad. Even without that you're going to look after me for the rest of my life while I sit in a chair by the window, and live on my pension in a back street in Cheltenham . . . after this sunlight and space. I'm fit as a flea. I'll last fifty years."

It's gone away: no pain. Perhaps if I keep talking to myself, very fast, it will stay away.

"You can take in boarders, because, of course, I won't get any pension really; this thing has not been caused by forestry duty—no glory, no glory at all, just a thing. You won't have to pretend to like dancing with me any more, because we won't be able to dance. . . ."

Talk faster, talk faster.

"I've never liked it and I'm no good at it

He grabbed her by the arm. The murderous bees had spotted them. "Come on—into the water!"

and, of course, being you, you won't go out with anyone else much for fear I'll think you're deserting me in my need; you'll have a nice time. . . ."

The long pin probed again, and he heard himself snarling the words at her back, almost aloud. She half turned, and he twisted his face quickly back to impassivity. A close thing. Tell her all that? She knew it already. That's why she's been so nice and kind to me, and doesn't ask Charlie Manston and other people round in the evenings any more.

Here was the pin again. . . . I can't think straight: it's a strange kind of headache, not near the eyes, farther back and towards the right, underneath. At least, that's where it begins, with the pin. After that it is rhythmic; I'll keep step with it . . . *stab-left, stab-right, stab-stab*. Now there'll be a long time when I don't really know what or where the pain is. I can see quite well, shakily; perhaps it's my head shaking and nodding. If it is, I can't stop it. The *stab-stab* will stop of itself. It will stop, and become a freight train going round and round, and flashing its searchlight on and off, very bright behind my eyeballs: no bell, though; no siren.

This is unbearable, worse than ever before, and I *will* not bear it. Oh, God, take it away from me while I think. Let me think of everything. She likes Charlie; he loves her—who doesn't? More her age, too.

No children: that's all right. Well insured: over-insured, in fact. They all say that's why I haven't got any money. Please, God, turn that searchlight off.

He stopped stealthily at a bend in the track and unslung his rifle; it had to be here in the middle of the path to be an accident. The clanging aching grind in his head went on. He pushed the safety catch off, put the rifle-butt on the ground, picked up a twig long enough to reach the trigger, and jammed the muzzle into his mouth. The steel was cold and the searchlight hurt more. No, not in the mouth, that was the sure mark of suicide.

Let me think! Man stumbles carrying loaded rifle—shoots himself—in the neck or chest, perhaps. Neck best; up into the neck and through the back of the brain where the searchlight was, where the train was, picking up speed with a shattering of metal, *clang-clang-clank*.

He hunched his tall body uncomfortably over, feeling sick, and jabbed at the hair trigger. The searchlight expanded and exploded into a sunburst.

WARMTH and wetness . . . warmth and darkness, and a million soft fibres crawling. . . . He opened his eyes. Mary's face was on his chest, her arms round his neck, her fair hair spread over him. She sobbed jerkily, with no tears now, but his neck was still warm and wet.

He breathed in harshly. The pain had gone and the light was on, the sunlight. Over his head the jungle was a pale bright yellow and brown. Water ran somewhere near in the gorge. Mary crying, and failure again, failure in everything. He wasn't even a very good forestry officer.

She sat up and looked at him, her eyes raw and dry. He bent his head, and idly worked the bolt of his rifle. A cartridge, whole and unfired, dropped out and tumbled in the leaves. He examined it slowly, turning it over in his hand. Firing pin impression clear, straight in the middle of the cap. Misfire. Ha-ha! Hahahaha! Ha-bloody-ha! Very funny indeed! Passed out from funk.

He got up and said: "Come on, I fell over."

She turned away, climbed stiffly to her feet and went on up the path.

She knew! She knew! She must have looked round at the last moment, must have rushed at him as he fell backwards.

In front, Mary walked out of the trees into an open space covered in tumbled rocks. The sides of the gorge towered beside her, stunted bushes clinging to crevices in the face. He watched her dully, saw her stop and unsling her rifle, heard but did not take in her words:

"Oh, Harry, Harry! A bear! Look—it's going . . . quick!"

There was the bear, half-way up the cliffside, shambling quickly under an overhang. It must be on its way to a honey-stealing—he could see the enormous hives of wild bees just ahead of it.

An electric meteor of fear, honest fear, the thing he used to know once, before these darknesses, flamed through him.

"Bees!"

He shouted at her, stumbled forward and struck at the barrel of her rifle. He was too late.

The shot cracked out like a whip and he heard the metallic *spang* as the bullet smashed into one of the nests up there and splashed against the rock of the cliff. Stones trickled, lead splinters whined off among the bushes. The bear had disappeared, and Mary was crying: "You made me miss it. . . ."

He pulled at her arm, screaming: "Come on—bees—into the water!"

THEN he saw that she knew what she had done. She had aroused the bees, the terrible bees of the Central Provinces, the insects which are more murderous than wounded tiger or startled cobra. The thought, even as she ran beside him with a dawn of fright in her eyes, had the bitter-sweet exhilaration of dry champagne.

This was a human fear from outside himself, something to fight. He wanted something he could fight.

They were out already from the hive Mary had hit, five or six thousand of them. He did not look over his shoulder; he knew what he would see—a black spiralling cloud, spreading wider and farther, in rapid, searching circles. He could hear the noise clearly now; it was just like what it was, a lot of bees—a big buzzing.

The noise became frantic. It drummed, dropped in tone, and caught the steady rhythm of waves, till it was the angry ocean rumbling in cadence on a metallically vibrating shore. But it was vicious and personal, and he fought joyously, trying to think against it—a whining, earth-filling, drumming thunder: up, down; up, down; up, down.

He yelled: "Mary, there must be half a million coming for us. Use your hat in the water!"

The river was a hundred yards away. The

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Masters: a writer by accident

AT THIRTY-EIGHT, John Masters, author of *The Blinding Darkness*, has been widely hailed as "a major novelist." He has achieved this distinction with only three novels—and his literary career began by accident.

An ex-Indian Army colonel and Chindit commander (he won the D.S.O. with Wingate), he went to America in 1948 to try to finance a Himalayan expedition. A New York magazine accepted an article he wrote on India—and his new career had started.

His three novels—*Nightrunners Of Bengal*, *The Deceivers* and *The Lotus And The Wind*—are the first of thirty-five he intends to write. The grand theme: the story of the British in India.

He is married, has two children and now lives in a farmhouse an hour's drive from New York.

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM KEMP

Opportunity knocks for a new act, watched by Carroll Levis and secretary. On right is Violet Pretty, the show's commère, a former Birmingham beauty queen

Carroll Levis discovers the way to stardom

by DENNIS HOLMAN

Would-be stars with their party pieces hunt the showman wherever he goes. They have brought him fame and fortune—and robbed him of his own chance on the stage

LATE ONE NIGHT LAST YEAR, Carroll Levis, the impresario who devotes himself entirely to new talent, heaved his bulk of approximately twenty stone out of the stage door of the Palace Theatre, Chelsea. As he did so, a man emerged from behind a waiting car with one hand in the pocket of his jacket; he appeared to be holding a heavy object, which he pointed with sinister effect. To Levis, whose detective father was murdered by Toronto gunmen, it looked like a stick-up.

"Get in," the man said, opening the car door.

"No," said Levis.

"This way, then." And Levis found himself being hustled back into the theatre. Once inside, the stranger produced not a gun but a mouth-organ, and demanded an audition then and there. With his usual *bonhomie* restored, Levis promised him sympathetic consideration if he would come to the regular audition on the following Friday.

Such incidents, Levis feels, are the natural consequence of his particular brand of show business. After seventeen years of scouring the country for singers, instrumentalists, comics, impressionists and other variety acts, and presenting his discoveries on the stage and radio, his name is a household word. With his bulky figure and straight, white hair, he can rarely escape recognition in public.

He claims that he has been chased across the street by a dog's snarling, to find, on looking round, only the grinning face of the imitator, who then asked for an audition. On another street a mimic made him jump by creeping up behind and doing a car horn. In Swansea, he was about to enter a shop when he heard his name called, and looked round to find a crowd of builders at various levels of scaffolding beginning to sing "Sospan Fach" for his benefit. At King's Cross Station, he says, a quartet of porters do a song-and-dance act whenever they

see him on the platform, and there is a Café Royal waiter who acquires the accents of Maurice Chevalier when taking Levis's order.

"Some people do the most unexpected things when they see me," says Levis. "On my last visit to Plymouth I went into a shop to make a purchase, and the assistant recognized me and began delivering his sales talk operatically. On a railway station, a barber suddenly began scat singing as I was being shaved. With the razor at my throat, he then asked what I thought of his act."

Tired as he sometimes gets of eager would-be stars, Levis is the first to admit that he has found a goldmine in embryonic talent. His agent, Will Collins, says it is the only consistently certain bet in variety without costumes or scenery. "Carroll holds double-week records for theatres all over the country," he says. "Some of the larger ones gross between £3,000 and £4,000 a week." Levis's cut is between half and two-thirds of the takings, depending on the theatre.

In 1948, Levis had a nervous breakdown, but money was not a contributing worry. His earnings for the ten years before totalled £487,000, and at peak periods he has earned more than £2,500 a week—from two or three shows on the road, the B.B.C. and commercial broadcasting. Nevertheless, he returned to work in 1949 to find, not the credit of £39,000 he expected, but a deficit of £18,000, most of it owing to the Inland Revenue. It was cleared inside a year with little or no effect on his normal living standards, except that he and his wife Mina moved to a Park Lane flat. Previously they had occupied a suite in a big West End hotel, where the bills were often in the region of £120 a week.

As Carroll Levis's discoveries provide all the entertainment in his shows, his search for talent is continuous; he has to feed two companies on the road, his current radio series and, recently, his second TV show. Auditions are held on Monday afternoons and Friday mornings in whatever theatre he happens to be playing. Elfrieda Berger, Levis's secretary, and Eddie Brady, his guitarist, usually weed out the chaff before the boss arrives to make the final choice.

Many young performers, who dream of one day becoming stars, have been known to travel several hundred miles to see him. One Scotsman gave up his job in Glasgow and hitch-hiked to London, to be turned down at an audition. And there was a girl of thirteen who ran away from home in the belief that Levis had but to hear her to offer a contract. Instead, he bought her a railway ticket, put her on a train and wired her father to meet it.

Man Who Sang In His Bath

Levis maintains that he can spot a passable singer within eight bars of a song, but for every one of these about twenty have wasted their time, including some incapable of singing a true note.

One was a town clerk, debonair and impeccably dressed, who walked on the stage with a carnation in his buttonhole, carrying lemon gloves, a cane and a bowler hat. After one line, Levis called "Stop!" and the audition ended. He led the man aside and asked: "Who said you could sing?"

"My wife," the other replied. "I sing in my bath, and she suggested I ought to see Carroll Levis." Levis, who never leaves a rejected applicant with false hopes, told him the truth. Later, the wife wrote gratefully to say that her husband had given up singing for good.

Most people who come to be auditioned want to sing, and of these the largest proportion want to sing "Because." An army sergeant said he had something really different—he would sing "Because."

"Why should singing 'Because' be different?" Levis asked.

"Because I sing 'Because' standing on my head," the sergeant replied. And he did.

Levis rarely tries to smarten up a discovery for the show. "It would have a bad psychological effect," he says. "The untidier and more awkward a local boy or girl looks, the better. Once, to enliven a miner's song, I suggested he came on in his working-clothes, with his face blackened. I could barely get him off the stage, and it was like that for the rest of the week. But on the final night he spruced up for the occasion, and fell pretty flat."

Slick Production Banned

The warmth of his audiences, says Levis, is due to personal identification. "Most people have some sort of a party piece up their sleeve. This they would like to put over, given half the opportunity, and they get a vicarious thrill out of watching those they can identify themselves with."

Levis is careful about his showmanship. "I have to sell the material, but I mustn't oversell," he says. As slick professionalism might make people too critical, the production must not be too brilliant. Even permanent members of the company are produced with just a touch of awkwardness to play on the tolerant good nature of members of the audience, who roar with every repeated reference to Levis's size, and at gags of the level of "Are you married or are you happy?" Good-humoured and easy to please, they are also magnanimous.

One night in Salford a girl suddenly forgot the words of her song and ran off the stage in tears. Levis led her back. "Folks," he said, "this little girl has forgotten her lines. She wants another chance. Are you going to give it to her?"

"Yes!" the house echoed. And the girl finished her song on wave after wave of prolonged clapping.

Brian Scanlon was a Manchester boy soprano. He was working in a newspaper office when he appeared at an audition and was picked for a show. He was thrilled, and arranged his holiday so that he would have a week on the stage when Levis was playing at Blackpool. In preparation for his début, Brian took singing lessons. He went into strict training, swallowed raw eggs, avoided people with colds as though they had plague. But he had not reckoned on Nature; he sang only four notes when his voice broke before a packed house of more than two thousand people.

"A stage hand called me to the wings," Levis recalls. "The boy was standing on the stage paralysed. I walked on and took him off in tears. Then I went out and told the audience what had happened, and the thunder of applause Brian heard certainly made up for his disappointment."

Audiences Are The Judges

The best material that Levis tries out on the stage he uses for his broadcasts. Here the audiences are quite different, participating as judges and encouraged to show their preference by their applause. The applause is measured automatically by a volume-control device, and assessed on intensity (more people clapping), rather than duration (more determined friends).

Though it is possible to show the meter registering the applause on a TV screen, this cannot be done with sound only, with the result that unpopular decisions bring in heaped mailbags of protest. The letters are sorted, and the

Singing teacher Thelma Tewson shows would-be discoveries how to deal with a microphone.

Levis judges an Indian dance act. He is not put off by awkwardness; it helps to win sympathy

Most hopefuls want to sing—one rendered "Because" standing on his head. Levis says he can spot a winner within eight bars

Susan Irvin (right) is interviewed for the job of commère in a new show. Artists hold no binding contracts ; if better chances come along, Levis never stands in their way

discoveries with the highest score of letters are later staged in a special programme.

Radio nerves are the greatest hazard of Levis's programmes. One discovery panicked and slipped away without a word a short while before she was due to go on. As a broadcast is timed to the last second, Levis was in a spot until he remembered a girl he had heard singing in a snack bar not far from the Paris Cinema, where the recordings are held. The girl, Elizabeth Graham, arrived in her working-clothes. She went on without a rehearsal—and won.

It Doesn't Pay To Praise

Levis never praises a discovery. On the few misguided occasions that he has, the discovery has reacted by demanding money. For a broadcast the B.B.C. pays £5 and expenses, but to appear in a Carroll Levis stage show a local boy or girl can expect little more than enough to cover fares and loss of wages or overtime.

The pick of the discoveries, who decide to turn professional, are absorbed into the two road shows. Newcomers start at £7 10s. a week, rising in time and by their increasing box office appeal to £25. "We pay no commission, no fares, and work fifty-two weeks in the year," says Eddie Brady, Levis's guitarist for nine years.

The mother of one of the youngsters travels with the teenagers, taking care of their ration books and laundry: the "Teenagers" comprise half the number one show, with Violet Pretty as commère. Violet was a beauty queen from Birmingham before she teamed up with Levis two years ago.

"Carroll," she says, "never stands in a discovery's way if better opportunities come along. There are no binding contracts. But if they have made good, it's a three-to-one chance they don't want to know Carroll Levis."

Among the less reticent discoveries are singers like Petula Clark, Joan Winters, Tony Vaughan, Rita Marlowe, Kathleen Moody, guitarist Elton Hayes and "Bebop Queen" Terry Devon. In the comedy field are Alfred Marks, Frankie Howerd, Billy Kerr, George Meaton, Billy Shakespeare, George Martin and the Radio Rascals. There are also conductor-composer Ray Martin, concert pianist Joan Turney-Hill, band-leader Vic Lewis, and the girl trumpeter Joan Hinde. Two ventriloquists who began their careers with Carroll Levis are Terry Hall and Brenda Barron. Jimmy Edwards and Max Bygraves, though not actually discovered by Levis, both made their first radio broadcast with him during the war.

But he has not been infallible. Comedians Arthur English and Reg Dixon and singer Karen Greer, now top-liners, were turned down by Levis at their auditions.

Prize For Sambo And Rastus

Levis's first discovery was himself. Friday night was talent night at the radio station in Vancouver, where he was born in 1910; his father was an Irishman and his mother a Vancouver woman. One Friday night he and his school friend Hank Hemming blacked their faces for a double act, Sambo and Rastus, with which they won a five-dollar prize. Years later, when Levis was a radio announcer, he remembered the thrill he had experienced, and staged a number of discovery programmes in Canada.

In 1936 he came to Britain after having tried his hand at journalism, publicity, the interpretation of dreams, hypnotism and mind reading. Here he became a publicity man for Gaumont-British and presented what he called Carroll Levis Gaumont-British Radio Discovery Contests. In pursuit of publicity, he went to see Eric Maschwitz, then director of B.B.C. variety, about doing a broadcast with the winners.

"We were looking round for a suitable amateur talent programme at the time. Then this chunky Canadian strode into my office," Maschwitz recalls. "He took me to lunch in his one-room flat in Maida Vale, where he produced a half-bottle of wine and a meal he himself had cooked. He didn't appear to be too well off, but he sold me his idea of discovery contests. The day after the first broadcast, letters started pouring in. In less than a few weeks Carroll Levis was famous."

A Lost Chance Levis Regrets

It was a turning point, but, Levis insists, an unlucky one. He made money easily and fast. He went on the music halls. He made films, and got so involved in the exploitation of the idea that he never had a chance to develop his own variety talents, in which he still has faith.

In spite of his regrets, however, Levis has few interests outside his discoveries. "He never takes a holiday," Violet Pretty says. "Most Sundays he spends putting on extra discovery concerts. He never reads a book. He plays no games, takes no interest in sport, and he hardly ever goes to a play or a film."

His one hobby is flying, but he claims that he has been pursued by a hopeful singer even in the air. It was when he was taken for a trial flight by an aircraft salesman. As well as extolling his product, the salesman insisted on singing. Levis was impressed with both items; he bought the plane and booked the salesman for a broadcast contest.

On the ground, the salesman did even better. He won the prize. THE END

The two sailors, disguised as Italian soldiers, were hurled through the cathedral door. There a squad of carabinieri took them in charge. Protesting loudly, they were led down the steps

ABOVE US THE WAVES (4)

by Charles Warren and James Benson

To be captured by the enemy was a very real hazard to the men who went raiding in Britain's human torpedoes and midget submarines. This chapter of the stirring story of their wartime exploits tells of four charioteers on the run, and of the daring bids they made to escape

THE MEDITERRANEAN DARKNESS was clear, if moonless. The sea was empty, and a slight swell on it nursed the casing of the submarine gently up and down. But there was urgency, even alarm, in the cry that came from the conning tower: "All on oxygen!" Instinctively, the four hooded men who heard it glanced into the night.

"Hurry up!" The captain's voice was peremptory now. He could hear, as the four men in diving suits squatting forrard on the catwalk could not, the growl of the E-boat's engines coming nearer. The Thunderbolt had exceeded her duty, for the enemy had been casting round for nearly half an hour. Now, as a dog that suddenly gets the line, it was heading straight for the submarine. It was time to go; already the hull was flooding down. As he disappeared beneath the closing hatch, the captain looked forrard anxiously. He just distinguished two oblong shapes moving away from the casing. Then Thunderbolt dived, and the fate of the operation was left to the two human torpedoes wallowing on the surface of the sea.

Eighth Army At His Heels

The time was 10.30 on the night of January 18, 1943. The place was five and a half miles outside the mouth of Tripoli harbour.

In North Africa the war was reaching its climax. Rommel, nursing his Afrika Korps back into Libya, had the Eighth Army at his heels. Tripoli was about to fall, and its fine harbour would be needed for the Allied convoys from Egypt and the west. Intelligence had reported that the Germans were preparing blockships to seal the port after their withdrawal, and these ships the navy had been asked to immobilize before they could be put—and sunk—in their position. The navy's answer to the problem was the human torpedo, or "chariot," a weapon that had already shown its worth in attacks on Italian shipping in heavily defended Palermo.

On the morning of January 17, then, H.M. Submarine Thunderbolt left Malta with two chariots fixed to her forrard casing. The crews who were to ride them into the enemy port were Lieutenant Geoffrey Larkin and his number two, Petty Officer Conrad Berey, and Sub-Lieutenant Henry Stevens, who rode with Chief Engine Room Artificer Stanley Buxton.

The Thunderbolt, owing to navigational difficulties, was a little farther from the harbour's mouth than had been planned when she surfaced

Passport to freedom at the Holy City gates

at 10 p.m. on the night of the eighteenth. An E-boat was in the vicinity, but Lieutenant-Commander Crouch daringly kept his craft on the surface while the charioteers went through the long business of preparation—the painful squeeze into the rubber suits, the checking of the breathing apparatus, the testing of the torpedoes themselves. When, finally, the attentions of the E-boat became too pressing, crews and chariots were barely ready to take the sea and both machines fouled the submarine's casing as she dived. The hydroplanes on Larkin's torpedo were damaged, and Buxton, clinging to the second chariot, was pinned for a few seconds under the plunging Thunderbolt's jumping wire.

In both cases the damage was serious; how serious neither crew was to realize until some time had passed. Technically, the operation was to be a failure. But its story, which was just beginning as the two crews dragged themselves astride their machines, was to be remembered in terms of human courage and ingenuity.

Buxton was feeling miserably cold. For the last five hours, water had been seeping into his rubber suit from the rent cut in its left shoulder by collision with the submarine's jumping wire. Buxton could feel the water now, clammy as gum, percolating over his knees and thighs. He was doubtful if he could stand another dive. The last one had been deep, forty to fifty feet he had guessed, and even then, three hours before, he had had great difficulty in holding the mouthpiece of his breathing apparatus in position between his teeth. Now he was so chilled that it was all he could do to bite round it while the torpedo was on the surface. He had lost all count of time. Surely they must be well within the outer harbour now!

As if in answer, Stevens, riding in front of him, put his hand behind his back and motioned Buxton to lean forward. The luminous watch dial on the half-submerged instrument panel glowed in the faint moonlight. Four thirty. They had left the submarine six hours before, and midnight should have seen them inside the

Safe in the Vatican, Henry Stevens (left) and Stanley Buxton pose with the British Legation official who secured their refuge in the city

target area. Four hours had gone as if slept away; four hours of watchful riding through the swell, of sudden dives to avoid enemy convoys, of checkings and re-checkings of course. Dawn was not far off. Indeed, to Buxton's anxious eyes, the sky already seemed to be lighter in the east.

The torpedo put on speed and turned to starboard. They had been following the coast so far, and the turn took them towards the centre of the channel. A thin shape appeared ahead; it was no more than a pillar of deeper darkness in the night, but it might have been the lighthouse that marked the entrance to the inner harbour. Stevens steered at it for three minutes, then raised his right hand in a signal: they were going to dive. Buxton leaned forward and gripped the iron bar fixed to the casing between his knees; he bent his head, forcing his teeth to close on the mouthpiece.

The torpedo went down steeply, and at once any visibility the night might have held was extinguished in the almost tangible obscurity of depth. The cold was shocking, unmanning; it rose through his limbs like an icy blush. He struggled for strength, but his trembling jaws refused to meet on the mouthpiece, his lungs shrivelled, aching for air; he felt his lips distending under the mask into an uncontrollable grin. When he could stand it no longer he pushed out his hand and gripped Stevens's back.

For some moments his Number One did not seem to heed the signals, then the joystick came back and the chariot flattened out and rose to the surface. Buxton slumped down. He realized with dismay that he had hardly enough strength to keep astride the machine. The water in his suit was climbing to his waist; his head sang; he had the strange feeling that he was internally bruised. And he thought grimly that the attack had yet to go in, that the main task of the night was yet to come.

Three minutes later the problem was resolved for him. Stevens had throttled back and both men were peering into the darkness to get their bearings when, as if two giant furnace doors had opened, the night blew up in front of them. Light flooded across the water, and in it Buxton saw the mouth of the port they had tried to reach; it lay less than three hundred yards ahead. Two more explosions followed. They rose from the fore and aft holds of a ship which the subsiding glare showed to be lying broadside across the harbour. Stevens had been dead on course from the moment of launching from the submarine, but the torpedo had arrived too late. Tripoli harbour had been sealed by the enemy and the long, dangerous journey from Thunderbolt had been for nothing.

There was no question, with the torpedo's batteries running low and the day very near, of returning to keep the rendezvous with the submarine. There was nothing left for the two men

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDWARD OSMOND

Suddenly, the night blew up in front of the two charioteers. In the fading glare they saw that the enemy had sealed the harbour with a blockship

Geoffrey Larkin (left) and Conrad Berey, two of the charioteers who were captured in the raid on Tripoli harbour, at a recent reunion. They escaped after five hilarious days on the run

but to beach the machine and take their chance of reaching the Allied forces by land. Stevens turned the chariot to port and drove it slowly under a sea wall. While Buxton slipped off into water that reached his neck, Stevens set the demolition charge. Then he turned the torpedo round and sent it, sinking rapidly, towards the middle of the harbour.

Stevens removed Buxton's oxygen bottles and breathing bag and helped the exhausted man to climb on his shoulders. The wall was six feet high and Buxton, after clawing helplessly, fell back into the sea. The two men felt their way painfully along the wall, seeking an easier place. At once the water got deeper and the swell washed unpleasantly over their heads. Buxton, his breathing set gone, was utterly spent, and Stevens had to make a quick decision. Leaving Buxton clinging to a small crevice, he set off to find a more practicable spot.

To the man he had left his absence seemed eternity. His diving suit dragged him down, he was swallowing water with every wave; only the strength in his lacerated hands saved him from being swept away. It was a drowning man that Stevens finally rejoined. He slashed and removed Buxton's suit and boots; he told him the good news that the bottom rose steeply some yards farther up. Then he plunged under water again and, walking on the rocks, supported his swimming companion towards the shore.

Struck Head Against Parapet

It was slow progress, but eventually the water became shoulder, waist, then knee-deep. Buxton managed to grasp an overhanging derrick and Stevens lifted him once more on his shoulders and heaved him to the top. Stevens, by this time very tired himself, followed him up with difficulty and not without a near disaster when Buxton, gripping at the wet rubber sleeve of the climbing man, slipped and went over backwards to hit his head violently against the parapet behind. Dawn had almost broken by the time they had recovered from this struggle with the sea. Quickly, Buxton cut the suit from his companion, wrapped it round the diving boots and dropped it over the wall. Then, looking as jaunty as they might, they walked towards Tripoli and what they hoped was freedom.

The first step to freedom appeared in the form of a high barbed-wire fence. Tents were beyond it; men who might have been Italian soldiers were walking about. The charioteers decided on boldness; they slipped through the strands and made for the main gate of the camp. In spite of their soiled battledress and their general appearance of castaways, they walked past several Italians without being challenged. Then, as they neared the gate, their hopes literally went up in air as the sound of a tremendous explosion came from the direction of the docks.

Italians Called Their Bluff

The camp instantly woke to noisy life. The sentries on the gate stiffened to military postures. One of them raised his rifle and stopped the charioteers. Stevens, who knew a little German, started gabbling while Buxton fumbled for their faked German passports. It might have worked, but the explosion had excited the Italians. Sabotage was as clearly in the air as the great shroud of black smoke that was drifting over the harbour. Stevens continued to bluster, but one of the guards spoke better German than he. This man now took charge and the inevitable questions began. Why were they wet through? Why was Buxton's hair smeared with blood? And the explosion? That was *one* thing they could explain, wasn't it?

Five minutes later Stevens and Buxton were sitting in the guardroom drinking ersatz coffee. Never, they reflected, could a routine demolition have been more unfortunately timed for the health of two escaping charioteers. As they waited for full morning and interrogation, their only consolation was the hope that the second chariot crew had got through and pressed home an attack. At least, they told themselves, it was a good sign that Larkin and Berey had not yet joined them in the "pen." In fact, Larkin and Berey were not far away at that moment.

As almost invariably happened on chariot operations, the two torpedoes never saw each other again after being launched from Thunderbolt. When the submarine dived, Larkin and Berey scrambled astride their chariot and headed on to the course given them. The chariot ran smoothly, the state of the sea—a gentle swell—was propitious. Larkin and Berey felt that this was to be their night.

But the confident mood was not to last very long. After half an hour Berey spotted some dark shapes moving in front; they were soon identified as a small convoy—an E-boat, a trawler and a barge. Larkin at once decided to dive, and it was then that he discovered the full damage his machine had sustained when leaving the submarine. The hydroplanes were completely useless; even with the control column pushed as far forward as possible the chariot remained obstinately afloat. He managed to submerge it by a nice manipulation of the pumps before they reached the convoy, but every experiment he tried afterwards convinced him that the torpedo was manoeuvrable only on the surface. With the known defences of the harbour ahead—the curtains of anti-submarine nets, the patrol boats, the threat of searchlights—Larkin might as well have been in a rowing-boat as far as underwater attack was concerned.

His orders were clear. Rather than endanger the attack of the second chariot he must beach his machine and get away by land as best he could. But it was a bitter moment as he turned south and drove the torpedo towards the surf. He and Berey dismounted, set the explosive charge and sent the chariot rolling seawards. It dived about a cable's length from the shore.

Slipped Past The Sentries

The beach ran down from lofty dunes on which, the moon now being up, Italian sentries could be seen patrolling. Larkin decided to get away from the sea before first light, lie up in cover by day and strike inland and eastwards towards the advancing Eighth Army during the night. The two men slunk from the dunes, slipping between converging sentries, and reached the higher ground above the shore. They were in the outskirts of Tripoli, among what might have been vehicle parks and repairing sheds. The district looked too inhabited for their liking, but it supplied them with something very valuable—water, which they found in a cement tank against a wall. They filled their water bottles and pushed on till dawn.

The light came suddenly, showing them a landscape devoid of cover and manifestly frequented. A straight, metalled road ran into the town, and along it lorries carrying damaged armour were moving. It was not an ideal place in which to spend the day, but it had to serve. Berey found a deep slit trench just off the road and the charioteers settled down in it as the sun rose with disconcerting speed.

It was a long day but pleasantly cool. At 6 p.m. they thought it safe to make a move. Larkin was anxious to leave the road, but he soon found that progress off it was far too tiring and slow in the heavy sand. Nor was there any hope of finding water, their supply of which was alarmingly low.

Slashed Telephone Wires

They came back to the tarmac and stepped out as fast as their aching plimsoll-shod feet would allow. Many tempting motor vehicles were passed, but each was heavily guarded. To compensate, in some small way, for their failure to reach the blockships, the charioteers slashed the cables and telephone wires that ran the length of the road. The approach of morning disclosed a copse of shady evergreens and in this, sustained by Horlicks tablets and a few mouth-wetting pulls at their flasks, they uneventfully passed the day of the twentieth.

After sunset they started on their third night of marching. The moon was bright and moving figures stood out clearly in the flat, lucid landscape. Motor traffic was heavy and the charioteers slouched along, trying to look as much like Arabs as possible when transport went by them. Two hours later they entered the well-defended area of Castel Benito airfield. Here was danger. They heard engines warming up; aircraft took off and landed, sentries patrolled the perimeter and German soldiers kept walking out of gates in the wire fence.

They had just stepped from behind a ruined

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DIGBY

by ***DAVID WALKER***

ILLUSTRATED BY SHOWELL

From all over the world they came, to pay Fiona homage. Then—oh, treachery!—foul disaster fell from the sky

THE LIFE OF DIGBY P. ROSS, prominent New York businessman, had been blameless—until he had come to Scotland, the land of his ancestors. One whiff of Highland air, and he'd lost both his head and his heart. News of his adventures had reached New York and his wife Madeleine: she had flown over to find out what was going on.

In New York, Digby had been jaded, nervy, overworked. Madeleine had even talked of divorce. Once, she said, he'd had a streak of poetry in him; now he was just a prosaic money-maker.

Madeleine had been wrong. In Scotland, Digby was a different man. He'd shot, fished, drunk deep, knocked out a policeman. Worse still, there was now another girl in his life. And what a girl!

Her name was Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks. A tempestuous redhead, she took love seriously—almost as seriously as she took the Clan whose chieftain she was. And when she found out that Digby's middle name was Prissitulchan, which linked him with Clan history, she was overjoyed. She even invited him to make a speech at the forthcoming Kilburnie Gathering.

From Fiona, Digby had heard the old story of the massacre of the Kilburnies by the Tarrs of Balgersho, in the nearby Bloody Gorge. That feud, it seemed, still went on. Hence Fiona's contempt for handsome young Lord Balgersho, ex-Spitfire pilot and war hero, who was always making light-hearted passes at her.

Digby had feared the worst when Madeleine arrived at Glendrogan, where he was staying with his cousin-in-law, Colonel Galbraith. But he was relieved—if a little jealous—to see that she and Balgersho were getting on splendidly together. He was less pleased when Madeleine shot a stag he and Fiona were trying for.

But what did it matter, after all? The Highlands and Fiona had gone to his head. Tomorrow was the Gathering. He felt inspired. He sat up till 2 a.m., writing—not a speech, but a poem. . . .

PART 5

The Gathering

AROUND the granite amphitheatre walls the Kilburnies sat—old ones and young, from Scotland, from across the border, from beyond the oceans, all of them come here to the meeting place of Clan Kilburnie, to renew on this one day an ancient fealty.

Fiona had never looked so beautiful. Her blouse was a simple thing of snowy silk, neck-line plunging to the brooch. Kilt, nylons, shoes, quite plain and perfect.

The pipers had played their marches, pibrochs, reels, strathspeys, all culminating in

Fiona, her arms raised imperiously, stood alone on top of Chieftain's Rock. "Braw Kilburnie!" the clan shouted, as cheer after cheer rang out

the Clan quickstep—"The Bonny Birks o' Burnie." And over all had lain Fiona's mood of queenly dignity. Now, the luncheon, piping and dancing were over. Fiona stood beside Digby on Chieftain's Rock—the high place where only he had been invited.

"Now," she said, "the time is come to call upon our kinsman from America, the last bearer of a famous name, the great Digby Prissitulchan Ross." Cheers volleyed, echoed, died.

And Digby told them the story of the Bloody Gorge. He told it in the words which had poured torrentially out of brain through fingers to his pen last night, and were now so vividly to mind that he had not glanced at the copy in his hand.

He paused from time to time to watch rapt faces, to feel silence, to taste the witchery. The only sound was a rippling rap and tuck of the Kilburnie Standard overhead.

When he had finished, nobody stirred. Even the standard hung inert. Digby put the poem in his sporran, which had a handy pocket, and took Fiona's hand. She rose to stand beside him. With his left hand he made a small gesture of command, palm upwards, fingers spread. The whole assembly stood.

"On your behalf I dedicate this poem to another Fiona, another Chieftain." He held her hand high. "To our glorious Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks." Then Digby kissed her long, slim fingers.

"Braw Kilburnie!" The Clan motto, shouted in homage. And again: "Braw Kilburnie!"

She smiled her thanks to him, inclining her head in a nod that was blessing and dismissal.

He knew his place. He stepped into the background, leaving her alone on the main pinnacle of Chieftain's Rock, facing tumultuous plaudits from her clan.

Cheer after cheer rang and resounded and sped against the hills.

Nobody heard the approach of a small blue monoplane along the glen until it was almost overhead.

Digby drew breath. He watched Fiona. He saw her body stiffen, hands clench at her side. Balgersho, he thought. That goddam fourflusher is going to ball things up.

Lord Balgersho did just this. First he buzzed Chieftain's Rock at zero feet straight for the hillside, standing on his tail at the ultimate split-second, fading in a stall turn, quite unbelievably dangerous to himself and them. Digby longed to dive down flat upon the rock, but he could not do so honourably, for Fiona stood with squared shoulders, not yielding an inch even when the backwash threw auburn hair awry.

Balgersho then did every trick in his incomparable repertoire—loops, slow rolls, flips, vertical turns, whole circuits upside down, stalls and sickening spins, dives, falling leaves —all this within and over the rock walls of the amphitheatre.

It was frightening, and most of the Kilburnies lay flat. Then a white, fluttering shower of paper streamed from the right-hand window of the aeroplane. Digby was amazed to see a woman's face through the open cabin window, and a pair of hands still busily expelling paper. Madeleine was very pale. As she went past, she put a thumb to her nose, fingers extended in that most vulgar of all gestures.

"A-s-ch-ch!" he heard Fiona spit. Then the blue plane was gone.

But paper was still fluttering down. Digby collected two sheets and gave one to Fiona. The sheet bore a single picture. It was the golden stag of Fiona's brooch—of the Kilburnie Standard—standing broadside, head turned. The nose was a daub of vivid red. Underneath were these lines:

"Oh Prissy with your nose so bright
Why won't you ride my bike tonight?"

Digby flushed. He knew what he was going to do; he was going to square up to Hamish Balgersho, so-called peer and baron; he was going to bust him wide open.

Down there, the Kilburnies had looked and read and looked again in silence. But now a growl ran round the amphitheatre. They could not know the full purport but they could smell sacrilege.

Fiona crushed her pamphlet, threw it away, spread both arms high. Silence fell at once. Now, as never before, she was the angry priestess.

"Yon was Tarr!" she cried. "The cursèd Tarr of Balgersho! Form up! All able-bodied men get in the ranks!" She bounded tempestuously two steps at a time down into the arena. Digby followed. Every strong male Kilburnie, even some older men, came at the double and formed two ranks. They had been stirred by the doings of the day. They had been aroused by Digby's epic poem. An ancient, never-forgotten grudge had been inflamed. Now the perfidious Tarr himself had fanned the embers to red heat.

The pipers broke into "The Bonny Birks o' Burnie"; the column swung out of the arena.

After three miles, Digby thought some of the weaker spirits or less active bodies might be flagging. Far from it. They were welded into a tight unit, a fanatical army; they would follow their Chieftain through exhaustion to the death.

"Pipes and drums get off the road!" Fiona ordered, pointing to the parking place just this side of the gorge.

Digby ran forward to do her bidding. He knew the piper who was boss — Andrew Kilburnie, pipe-major and something of an old curmudgeon. Up here beside him, the squeals were terrible, assailing eardrums. Digby shouted his message. The wild music stopped. Andrew led them off the road.

"Halt!" called Fiona. Digby went back to join the ranks. She looked at him, yet through him, too. Her bosom heaved under the silken blouse; the sun shone through her hair; her long legs met perfectly at knee and calf and ankle. This was the symbolic moment.

"Play 'The Bonny Birks,'" she called to Andrew, and waited till pipes and drums were once more ready. "Quick march!"

They marched to meet that intoxicating melody of battle, and passed the band, and here was the entrance to the Bloody Gorge.

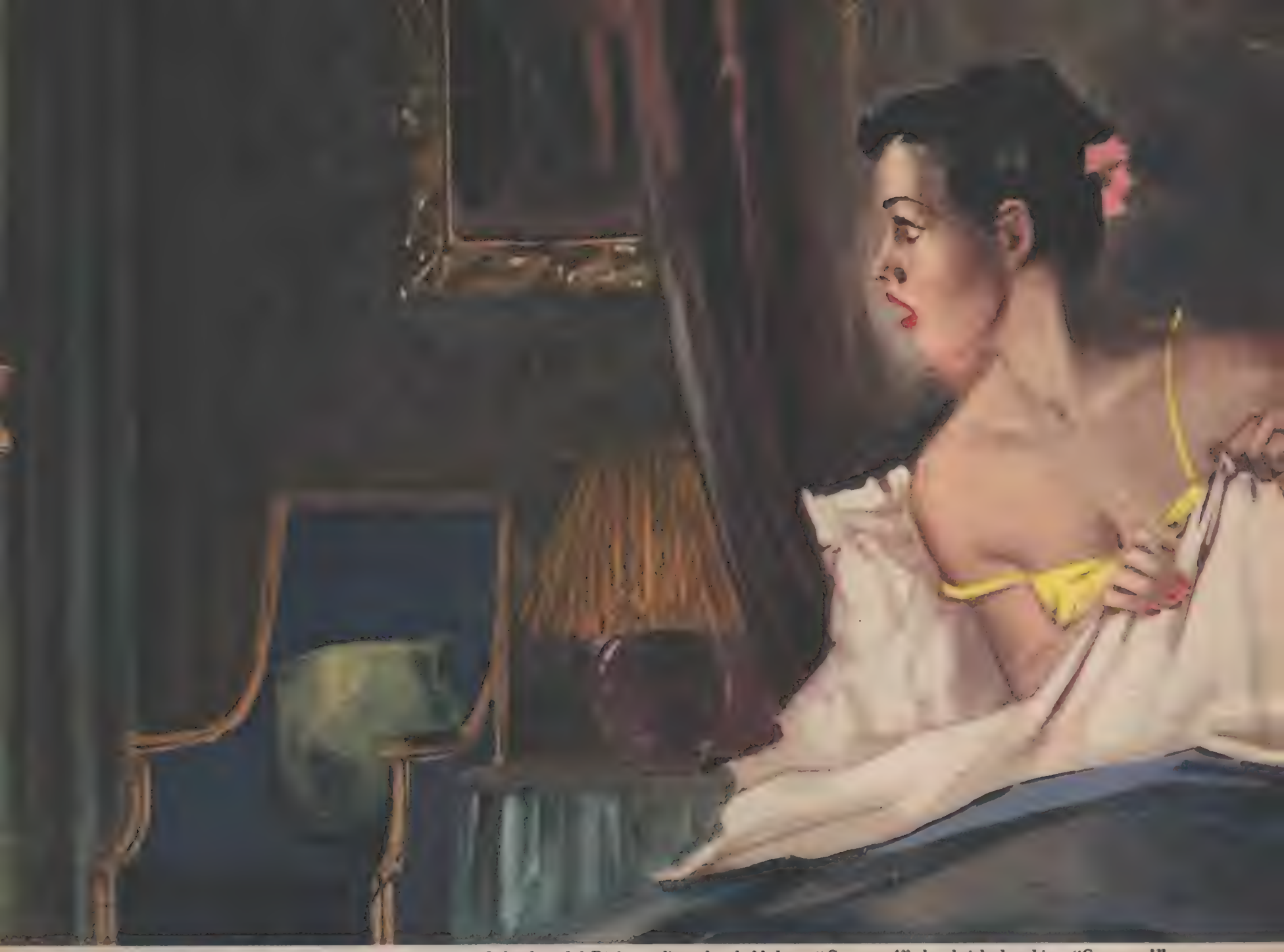
"Come away, Prissitulchan!" She took his hand, broke into double time, and together they ran just as the first rays of the westering sun struck into that desolate, forbidding place where the river hissed, grumbled, scudded, close below, the right wall rose vertical from water, and on the left, steep scree from the roadside to a precipice; high overhead a raven wheeled, bird of ill omen.

Digby glanced over his shoulder. They had left the clansmen far behind. They were halfway through.

But what was this? A blue plane came roaring up the gorge, bucking and twisting in the

Balgersho's plane came roaring up the gorge, scattering stink-bombs and more paper. Digby and Fiona held their breath and ran for it

Confidently, Digby swung his leg over the sill.



Madeleine sat bolt upright and gave an ear-shattering scream. Only then did Digby realize what he'd done. "Go away!" she shrieked at him. "Go away!"

turbulent airs, a few feet clearance between wingtips and rock.

It all happened in a few twinklings of an eye. Out of the starboard window came more paper, and then a white object, a carton or the like, thrown down to strike the road. A second followed as the plane shot overhead. Three, four, five, six, seven, eight—and all found the road. The last few landed right in the Kilburnie column.

He looked dazedly again at the first carton. It had burst open. A yellowish liquid was spreading on the road; from it came now a most intolerable stink, a stench of rotten eggs and worse, unforgettable from lab. experiments in school. It was the smell of sulphuretted hydrogen, H_2S—nauseous, nose-gripping.

Digby held his breath and acted quickly, pulling Fiona with him down the road, past the worst of it, and on thirty or forty yards until the odour was only a horrible miasma.

THE plane circled above the gorge, flew east again and out of sight. They looked upstream. Chaos reigned. The orderly column of Kilburnies had broken up, were blundering away against the sun. It was a rout of Kilburnies by Balgersho.

Fiona cursed, watching her clansmen depart. "Come on then, Digby!" she cried at last.

Digby needed no urging. He had been battle-keen before; he was battle-lusting now.

They stepped on to the bridge just below the confluence of merry Bal and sombre Kil.

"Come away!" They raced along Balgersho road, swung left at the widening of the glen. Ahead were the battlements of Balgersho Castle, derelict too, slightly less enormous than the Birks, but not Balgersho's current residence—that was a bungalow, an aluminium prefab, tucked into trees beyond the landing field.

The plane was coming in to land. It stopped just as Digby and Fiona reached the field. Hamish and Madeleine got out. They were laughing.

"Leave him to me, Fiona," Digby said as they closed the distance. "This is my account."

Madeleine turned first. "Gracious," she said, "Here's Rudolph in his kilt."

"You shut up!" Digby snarled.

Balgersho turned. A smile spread over his face in the way Digby thought so lively and charming that first evening. "Hallo, Digby, old boy," he said. "Hallo, Queenie. Fancy seeing you."

Now that the moment was here, Digby felt calm. The small shivering tremor and dryness of his mouth—these were the pumpings of adrenalin. He slowly took off his jacket, which had belonged to the previous Kilburnie Chieftain. "You'd better get ready," he said politely. "I intend to remove that smile from your face."

Balgersho laughed. "Have some sense," he said. "All in jest, Digby, my dear chap."

"I've taken a bellyful in the way of jest from you," said Digby. "Are you scared?" He handed the jacket to Fiona. He watched Balgersho's face. The smile stiffened a little, lost mobility.

Madeleine remarked: "You never did have a sense of humour. You've always been a prissy little prig."

"Shut up!" This from Fiona. The women glared at one another.

"Keep quiet, both of you," said Hamish in his lordly way. "No hair-scratching. Look, Digby, old boy, I like you very much. You're the last chap I want to sock. What's all the fuss about?"

"You're a crook is what all the fuss is about. And you're scared."

BALGERSHO'S face darkened slightly, but he kept on smiling. "Well, if that's it," he said, and removed his jacket. Madeleine took it from him. "Come on, chum, I don't want to fight you, but I can't take that. Withdraw." He was still not bellicose.

Digby did not answer. He assumed a pugilistic stance.

"I'd better warn you I boxed welter for the R.A.F."

"I'd better warn you I fought heavyweight for Harvard." This was totally untrue. Digby had taken lessons at one point, but never fought anyone in his adult life except one Copper Jamieson and Constable McIntoon. Both knock-outs. A lie, but he knew the value of morale in warfare.

They circled one another on the grass field beside the plane in the presence of two lovely seconds.

Balgersho had a loose and limber crouch, chin tucked behind his guard. He smiled, but

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Bill Murray takes a gamble on soccer's big names

by WILFRED GREATOREX

For three soccer players—£65,000. Sunderland's manager has astonished rivals with his latest lavish spending. But has he bought the team of the year—or the flop of the century?

SUNDERLAND'S MANAGER, Bill Murray, was anxious. From the players' tunnel at Roker Park one Saturday afternoon in November, 1951, he watched a bulky black-haired half-back named George Aitken take the field with Sunderland against Fulham. Things had been going badly for Sunderland. They had won only eleven points from sixteen games and were lying third from the bottom of the First Division of the Football League.

Bill Murray had been having some sleepless nights. "The bedroom ceiling," he recalls, "had become a football field." In desperation, he had set out the previous Thursday for Glasgow, where, by appointment, he met the directors of a Scottish club, Third Lanark, and offered to buy Aitken. The deal went through, after nine-and-a-half hours' talk, at five o'clock next morning. The fee was £20,000.

Murray, a square-framed former full-back with a lean face, bushy eyebrows and strong, grey hair, slept for two hours and then, with one of his directors, a builder called Lawrence Evans, drove to Greenock to negotiate for another Scottish star, Morton goalkeeper Jimmy Cowan. The club, however, would not sell. Murray went home to Sunderland by way of Glasgow and, he says, had time for a snack before going to Newcastle to meet Aitken off a night train. At two o'clock on Saturday morning he saw the player into an hotel and gave instructions that he should have breakfast in bed.

Now, Murray was wondering if his two night-shifts would produce results. In fact, Aitken had a sound game and Sunderland drew two-each. "The tide," Murray says now, "had begun to turn." Since then, William Milne Murray has had fewer worries about Sunderland's League position—they finished ninth in the First Division last season—but he has continued his commercial travelling round the British Isles in search of top-line players. In the past few years Murray has spent the best part of £200,000 on them. Last June he astonished rival managers, football officials and fans by buying three famous internationals—Ray Daniel, of Arsenal and Wales, for £28,000; Billy Elliott, of Burnley and England, for £28,000; and the man he missed on that earlier expedition, Cowan, for £9,000.

Fifty-three year old Murray regards soccer as a branch of commerce. When his club's policy of buying success was criticized recently as poor sportsmanship, Murray remarked in his thick Scots brogue: "The sooner everybody stops being hypocritical about it and admits that we're in business the better it will be for all of us."

Even before the Aitken venture Murray had spent £12,000 on each of two forwards, Bingham and Wright, and had broken all previous transfer records by signing Trevor Ford from Aston Villa for £30,000. As far back as 1948 he had bought an England inside-forward, Len Shackleton, from neighbouring Newcastle United for what was then the first £20,000 fee.

Soon after Shackleton's transfer, Sunderland were playing away from home in a Cup-tie. As the team came out, Shackleton was intercepted by four photographers and asked to pose for a picture. Suddenly an athletic man in a thick overcoat stepped between the cameramen and their subject and explained that unless several members of the team were taken together it would be better if no picture were taken at all. The man was Murray. "It made no difference," says a witness. "The cameramen merely enlarged Shackleton in the darkrooms. Bill must have known what would happen. Nevertheless, the gesture was good for team morale."

It cost Sunderland £115,000 to buy these five players: Ray Daniel, Trevor Ford, Jimmy Cowan, Billy Elliott and Len Shackleton. "But we don't throw money about on anyone," says Murray

Nine Internationals In Team

No difficulties about publicity fair shares are expected by Murray this season. Even Sunderland's detractors in the football world grudgingly estimate the value of the first team, which will include nine internationals, at about a quarter of a million pounds. "Bill has bought himself even bigger worries now," said one manager recently. "With a team of all the talents he'll need all his business acumen and smooth talk to keep things happy." One critic observed that Sunderland now have the team of the year or the flop of the century.

Murray admits no fears on this account. "We don't throw money about on anyone," he says. "We pick every man carefully, with reference to his character as well as his football ability. And then we give the team the best conditions they can possibly get." On July 27, when the players reported for training—there are twenty-two professionals, seventeen part-time professionals, ten National Servicemen and about twenty amateurs on the books—they found that new remedial-heat units had been installed, as well as electrical steam cabinets and foam baths. In the past three years a £7,000 gymnasium and floodlighting costing £4,863 have been put in. "We are out to make Sunderland *the* club," says Murray firmly. "Not the Arsenal of the north, but the Sunderland of Britain."

The latest outlay on new players has put the club in the red—not for the first time since it was formed by a group of local schoolmasters in 1883. "You have to spend to get," says the club's chairman, a plump, effervescent furniture manufacturer named William Ditchburn. "After two home matches we'll be in credit again—just see." Ditchburn has great faith in the star system. "People go to the cinema to see Gregory Peck and Rita Hayworth," he says. "The same principle goes for football."

In his search for new blood, Murray travels

In his £7,000 gymnasium, Bill Murray watches some of his players limber up for the season's start

thousands of miles annually. He bases his search on his own impressions of a player's performance against Sunderland, scouts' reports and what he cautiously describes as "the game's bush telegraph." He keeps tag on the local north-eastern leagues, but finds that only one in every two or three hundred junior players is likely to make the top grade in professional football.

Even established stars in whom he is interested often disappoint him. A few months ago he went to the Midlands to run the rule over a prominent half-back, but left at half-time after noting that the man drew back slightly in the tackle. "Physical cowardice," he explains, "is one of the greatest defects a player can have."

Supporters Deserve The Best

Sunderland's self-help and cheque-book superiority has brought the club many critics. "Not many of us can afford to go into an auction with Bill Murray and Sunderland," says one manager. "They're loaded." Murray, however, is uncompromising about his buying habits and takes the line that a town gets the football team it deserves. He points to an average home gate last season of 47,500 and total receipts of £84,428, from a crowd mainly made up of miners from the Durham coalfield, and heavy engineering and shipyard workers from such former depressed areas as Jarrow. "They're hardy folk," Murray tells, "and even in bad weather we can rely on them coming in their thousands."

Some of the 3,800 season-ticket holders travel sixty miles from Berwick and the Scottish border and others from Carlisle, seventy miles to the west. A few exiles come down from Edinburgh for all home games. "To these folk football is a religion," says Murray. "It's only right that we should try to give them the best."

Murray's own attitude to the game, according to those nearest to him, is not much less than an act of faith. "He is always terribly in earnest about things," says one of his own directors. There was an instance of this not long ago when Murray complained to several of his rival managers that the white ball, introduced as an aid to visibility in murky weather, was not true flighted. The weather, he said, affected it in the same way that it affected cricket balls.

When Sunderland played Dundee in a floodlit match one night last year the Sunderland players found that their red-and-white rig was new—in fluorescent material. "It was Murray's idea," says Ditchburn. "It was fine showmanship and made the game look faster."

Murray's relations with his famous players are based on standards that some regard as too exacting. "He's like Horatio Nelson," says one clubman, "the way he talks about every man doing his duty." According to Bert Johnston, Sunderland's trainer, Murray is tough but fair. He is intolerant of bad play but saves his comments until the Tuesday after the game. "It's no use roasting a man immediately afterwards," Murray explains. "Nobody knows better than the player himself that he's had a bad day."

Sometimes, he admits, he finds it hard to hold his tongue. At one game two seasons ago he put a hand to his head in dismay as a Sunderland forward miskicked in front of goal; then exclaimed unbelievingly to a friend: "Just look —he's *laughing* about it!" So incensed was Murray on another occasion that he broke his own rule about criticizing a player right after a game. The man, who had played indifferently, had run across the field at the end of the match to shake hands with the opposing goalkeeper. "What do you think you're up to?" Murray exploded. "You would be better occupied thinking about where you went wrong. You could have shaken hands off the field—here—if you really meant it."

To aid his judgment, Murray studies psychology. He likes to classify his men. He once told his inside-left—international cricketer Willie Watson—that he would make a better right-half. "As an inside-left Willie was holding the ball too long," he explains. "It wasn't selfishness but idealism. As a batsman he likes to play the perfect shot or none at all, and in the same way he was dallying until he could make the perfect pass. I told him there was no room for idealism in soccer." Watson moved to right-half back and was capped for England in that position.

He Was Sold As Make-weight

Murray grew up in Scotland and was trained to become an engineer, but drifted into football by playing first as an amateur and later as a professional with Cowdenbeath. In 1927 he experienced the player's side of a transfer when he was sold to Sunderland—"as make-weight" with another player—for a combined sum of £8,000. He was regular full-back for ten years before moving to St. Mirren. On April 1, 1939 —"a significant date," he says—he was appointed manager of Sunderland, and within a few months was a welfare officer in the army.

Both his playing experience and his work on welfare, he says now, equipped him for his post-war dealings with the game's stars. Before signing any player he insists on seeing him in his own home. There, he says, he gets as much idea about the player's suitability as he does from watching him play. "You can tell from the wife's tastes what sort of domestic background he has. A player with an unhappy home life isn't much use to us."

This interest in a player as an individual as well as a footballer usually pays. Trevor Ford gave as one of his reasons for going to Sunderland from Aston Villa that he and his wife had been impressed by Murray's friendliness.

On the other hand, Murray once called to see one of his players who was down with a cold and was kept talking in the hall by the wife. "She was trying to convince me that my team selections were wrong," he says. "She was all for dropping one of my best men. I had to tell her I was more interested in talking about her husband's health."

Gets The Wives On His Side

Wives, Murray concedes, are often instrumental in making a player decide on a move. In such a situation he will talk with them for hours. Where a new player is involved he uses every legitimate device he knows. Once he was having trouble in getting a forward who was a devout Roman Catholic. Murray asked a priest who was on his list of talent scouts to help by putting in a good word for Sunderland with the boy's father. Later, however, Murray found that the priest, being busy, had delegated the job to a colleague who was not popular in the footballer's home. "I warned him," says the manager grimly, "that if anything like that happened again I would cross him off my scouting list."

Murray had another religious complication some time ago. Some weeks after he had signed a promising young amateur, Murray was telephoned by the teacher who ran the church team for which the boy played. "Since he joined you," the caller complained, "the boy's church attendances have dropped badly." To Murray that did not seem too high a price to pay for the greater glory of Sunderland. THE END

He staggered on, bent almost double with exhaustion. Landorn came forward to meet him—but did nothing to help

DIAMONDS IN THE DUST

by NIGEL SLIGH

It was a brilliant, audacious plan. All they had to do was get under the wire, find the spot—and fill a sack with diamonds

IN THE DARKNESS, there was nothing to warn the two bearded, unkempt men that land lay near except the dull, reverberating beat of surf. It had a roar, Campbell thought, a roar and a thump like a warning, repeated at intervals: *keep out, keep out.* And beyond it, locked in the stony heart of the vast hinterland of South West Africa, was the fabulous *Sperrgebiet,* the forbidden area, the greatest treasure house of prospected diamonds in the world.

Campbell and Stacks felt the motor boat rock as the outriders of surf caught it.

They were a strange contrast. Campbell, short, wiry, forty-five, physically and mentally the harder man. He was old in experience—a lifetime of prospecting in Africa—in suffering and long-deferred hope. Stacks, younger than Campbell, was weighed down with fat, lethargic in mind, a sponge from years of hard drinking.

And yet they had travelled together, partners in crime, on the long, dangerous passage from Tiger Bay, six days to the north. Hugging the coast-line, yet keeping a distance for fear of detection. And all the time Campbell regretted, every hour, the necessity compelling him to enlist the aid of Stacks.

Stacks worked for a Portuguese canner at Tiger Bay. He slept on one of the boats, was a fair mechanic and had sailed up and down the coast for fifteen years.

The plan—Campbell's plan—to break into the *Sperrgebiet* and steal a fortune in diamonds was essentially simple. Audacity its code name. The perfect team would have been one man—himself. But that was impossible. He had tried once before and failed. There had to be a craft to carry him down the coast so that he could strike into the desert interior by the easiest route—from the sea. And Stacks's trump card was that he was in a position to steal a suitable boat and navigate it.

The plan was still further complicated; there had to be a third man, a contact on the land-side of the wired-off area. Landorn, the third man in the scheme, would be waiting with a truck; he made a weekly journey from Tiger Bay into the interior, to native trading-posts, to outlying stores. He was a thin, restless man with an unpleasant, ingratiating smile.

The truck was necessary because they dare not use the boat for the return. Too many things might go wrong: a canning boat wasn't really built for such a long double journey; it was flimsy, weak; its fuel reserve was dangerously low. And another thing, most dangerous of all: it was practically impossible to hide. The boat had only to be spotted once while they were away, and they were lost.

So the plan, while perfect in originality and daring, was weakened, at its inception, by the allies which Campbell was forced to recruit.

Every requirement of the land party had to be transported on their backs over rough, desert country: entrenching tools to dig under the electrically wired fences, water for four days—not plentiful rations but the minimum, for water was heavy and the containers cumbersome. A compass. Rucksacks for the uncut diamonds. An emergency pack with essential medical aids. Courage. Desperation.

THE motor boat drifted for a few seconds and the roar of surf grew until it crushed out other thoughts; and then there was the faint splash as Stacks threw the anchor overboard, and a check on the run of the boat.

A surge of excitement possessed Campbell. They had made the first leg, the passage down the coast. Six days of blistering heat, days when the metal-work of the vessel scorched an incautious hand, when the glare off water blinded, and nights that were icy. But always Campbell had been buoyed up by hope and by a dream. It was a dream that had begun a long way back; the dream was diamonds—their cold, hard beauty cascading through his hands.

The origin of the journey from Tiger Bay began eight months ago, in the tin shack that was the bar of Bailey's Hotel. Wiping sweat from his face, drinking the tepid, canned beer, Campbell had sat and talked to Stacks and Landorn.

"I got in there once," Campbell said. "I can get in again. I've seen them. Yes, with my own eyes. Hundreds and hundreds of them. Diamonds, in the dust and grit. There to be picked up."

That was the *Sperrgebiet,* the forbidden area. South West, where the old German mining laws still remained in force and an area could be cordoned off and the riches within it vested in the State.

Stacks leant forward, like a hungry man who smelt food. Landorn cracked his finger joints. Even in his excitement, Campbell looked at them and detested them.

"I got in," Campbell told them. "I even picked them up. But I made a mistake. I came in overland from the farthest point, and by the time I got there I was half dead already. It took me over a week on my feet to get in and longer back. Three weeks in that heat, in that kind of country, will kill any man. I was glad to give myself up."

Campbell sipped his beer. Nothing would go wrong this time. The best area, the fabulous area, was one day's march from the coast; he knew that now. And the nearest point back from there to the electrified fence would

take only three days. Properly planned, the whole affair could be completed in four days.

"There they are," he said. "Thousands of them. But if a hundredth part of them all were chucked on the world market, they'd crash it. So the whole area was proclaimed *Sperrgebiet*—prohibited. They wired it in and charged the wires with electricity. They guard it better than the prison they had me in. Searchlights, machine-guns, I.D.B. laws and men with guns and not one prisoner except themselves and the diamonds."

It was a wonderful dream and when he spoke of it Campbell's face was transfigured. The lines of pain, of suffering, the lines which the sun had driven into his skin softened and his eyes became tender, as if he spoke of a lover.

The outline of the plan was extraordinarily familiar to him; it seemed to have appeared complete in his mind. It was the first thing he thought of when he awoke; it was the last thing his mind held when he slept. He was constantly revising and sharpening the details. But now it was set; there would be no deviation.

Stacks and himself would come in from the sea and scupper the boat so that no trace of it remained; they would get into the enclosure under the wire in the darkness, get as far as they could before light came, and then lie low for the day. The following night they should get to the diamonds. Then, three days away, the inland boundary; negotiate that and Landorn would be waiting with the truck at the pre-arranged place.

"What if Landorn don't make it?" Stacks suddenly asked, his small eyes glinting, and Campbell had the first moment of apprehension. But he answered easily: "He will. Think he'll miss his split?"

But supposing he did, Campbell asked himself, remembering Landorn's thoughtful joint-cracking, the thin, sly face. Or supposing Stacks played a trick on him? These two men supplied the instruments—the boat, the truck. Suppose they had discussed it together; suppose they had considered him superfluous?

Campbell stood close to Stacks as the surf broke against the bow. Then the boat rode steady except for a regular roll. Campbell glanced at the illuminated dial of his waterproof watch. One five. "Come on," he said. "Over you go." Leaning forward, he lowered the small rubber raft to which they had lashed provisions and water, the collapsible shovel and a water-tight box of compass, maps and medical stores. Then he groped in the darkness along the bilge-keel for the cock. His fingers tightened on the bolt-ring, jerking it upwards.

He slipped over the side after Stacks and grasped the raft beside him. They swam, resting from time to time, and then all at once a long finger of light, of intense whiteness, probed the blackness of sky and sea. It moved restlessly, in jerks, lying for a moment on water, then switched to the sand-dunes fringing the sea. Instinctively, both men lowered their faces to the wet rubber raft and floated. Campbell glanced back but already the motor boat had settled deep in the water.

For about five minutes the searchlight shone and then it was snapped off. They had by now drifted to the edge of the broken water and the raft surged violently upwards, carrying them with it, then flung them down in a trough, then rose again.

"Hang on, for God's sake!" Campbell shouted.

The roar and splash of surf was prodigious. It battered on their heads, struck their shoulders like giant fists raining blows upon them; foaming, creaming water and their nostrils were filled and their eyes blinded.

Suddenly one of Campbell's feet jarred and, digging in his toes, he struck ground. He clutched at the loose, draining sand and crab-wise hauled himself out of the foaming sea. He fell forward on to the raft and for minutes lay gasping. Before he could move, the searchlight

Campbell turned. Again, the searchlight probed the water. "Hang on, for God's sake!" he yelled

flashed again. In its glare he saw Stacks spread-eagled in the surf beside him.

"Don't move, for the love of God," Campbell said.

The edge of the beam struck the ground barely five yards above their heads, as though the patrol in the watch-tower had marked the landing and was now about to pick the men out at leisure.

As suddenly, the searchlight was doused and Campbell forced Stacks to his knees, dragging the raft behind him. They floundered up the beach, their feet sinking, slipping on the powdery sand. Ahead were the dunes. Clutching at the tufts of wiry grass, they hauled themselves up. They fell, struggled on again, slithered and drew themselves to the summit.

"Down now," panted Campbell. "They're working the light at regular intervals."

They lay prone in the shallow saucer of dune. Punctually the light stabbed the sky, burrowed into the ground, probing, searching. The instant that it was switched off, Campbell forced them both on. Twice more they lay still while the light searched and then Campbell pointed ahead into the darkness. "Fence," he said.

On his stomach, pausing whenever the light reappeared, Campbell dug with the shovel. The ground was soft, with occasional stones; soon he had excavated a hole large enough to take his shoulders. Exhausted, he rolled over and Stacks took up the shovel.

The hands on Campbell's watch showed three o'clock. There was an occasional metallic ring as the shovel struck rock. Behind them was the boom of the sea. Campbell listened intently for any other sound.

In his impatience, Campbell found Stacks unbearably slow. He snatched the shovel away and resumed digging.

It was twenty past four by the time the tunnel was completed and Stacks crawled under the wire fence. Campbell blessed the luck that had made their landfall midway between two watching-posts and that there was no sign of a patrol covering the boundary.

As he followed Stacks under the fence, his eyes by now accustomed to the darkness, Campbell distinguished the electric terminals on the posts. He hauled the raft through the hole and then set about filling in the tunnel behind them. On the inside of the wire he stamped the ground flat and scattered stones upon it.

He opened the watertight box and took a bearing on the compass. Crouching, lying flat at intervals while the light worked, they covered a mile before the first light of dawn pushed hesitantly into the black sky. To their left was a semi-circle of kopjes, boulder-covered humps of ground, and towards these the two men went.

They reached the kopjes and looked for a hide. Three large rocks formed a rough triangle and beneath the central one, balanced precariously upon the others, was a shallow hole. Into this they crept and Campbell punctured the raft with a knife. They settled the stores and opened one tin of food.

As he munched, Campbell smiled grimly. "We made it. According to plan."

Stacks nodded, tearing at the food between his fingers. "Who's for first watch?" he asked, yawning.

"Me," Campbell said. While he slept, Stacks might steal water. Overcome with sleep, Stacks might default on watch. He said steadily: "Better keep your water by you. I'm keeping mine."

"Don't you trust me?"

"We each keep our own," Campbell answered. "That way, it's best."

Stacks grunted and rolled over.

The sun swept up into the great arc of sky. No cloud. No shade except that thrown by the rocks. The heat, in the enclosed prison, was magnified. The very ground reverberated with it. They might have lain on a grill. Even Campbell, leaner by far than Stacks, sweated until there was no moisture in his wiry body. But he took only sips of water, conserving it.

Campbell watched the sun as if it

had been his last day on earth. It hung, a great molten ball, burnishing even the glare of sky, and its shadow never lengthened. Stacks slept, muttering, mumbling.

At length, at dusk, Campbell shook him. "Come on. Wake up."

They trudged forward, beneath the night sky, each man's brain filled with uncontrollable thoughts. Stacks resented Campbell's easy air of command. He had taken the risk, stolen the boat. What had Campbell to offer? Talk, talk. Said he knew this place. Fat lot of good that was. And Campbell despised the flabbiness of his companion, his greed and stupidity, his added encumbrance to a team whose sole strength lay in speed, efficiency and superb timing.

The loads on their shoulders were increasingly heavy. The ground was rough and often they stumbled. But fortune was on their side, for they saw no patrols.

By three o'clock, by Campbell's reckoning on his map, they reached the area of surface diamonds. They were in the centre of a shallow donga, a long, eroded gulley washed out by past rains, the ground littered with boulders.

Stacks threw down his load. "God, I'm done," he said.

Campbell stared at Stacks with contempt. Setting down his equipment, he made as thorough a search of the donga as he could in the darkness. One bank was scored with deep gashes where it had been undercut and they could hide beneath this should any patrol approach.

Daylight showed no trace of an intruder and cautiously Campbell quartered the ground, taking his water-container with him. He laid it down behind a pile of rocks where he could keep it under observation.

"So you don't trust me?" Stacks asked again. He said it with a mock-sorrowful air that set something quivering in Campbell. But he did not pause in the search.

Campbell recognized the raw, uncut diamonds with ease. As he stooped and picked up the first precious stone, he saw Stacks watching him beneath the hide. But diamond excitement was on him now; it drove every other thought from him. Despite his exhaustion, he lifted stones quickly, dropping them into the rucksack. At the start, he had little discrimination, but during the afternoon, remembering the distance still to be covered, he discarded many, taking care to select only those which he considered the finest.

By now, he had worked some distance from Stacks. Stacks would not have recognized a diamond from a worthless stone and it was quicker for Campbell to work alone, but he resented the hours of exhausting labour in the appalling heat, while Stacks rested.

Picking up the rucksack, heavy now, and the water-container, Campbell made his way, slowly, with tired, plodding steps, towards the hide. There was no one under the rocks. An opened tin of food lay on the ground. That was all.

Suddenly, to Campbell's heightened nerves, the donga was a place of unbearable silence and desolation. No sound. Nothing lived. Nothing but his panting breath and the laboured *tick-tick* of his heart. He stood, like an animal, scenting danger. The sun was in decline but the shadows were still hard and black; his own, like a round ball, so close to his feet.

He thought he heard a stone detach itself away from the eroded banks, and shied away. He called, softly: "Stacks!"

A dry echo ran along the banks No answer.

The compass had been taken from under the rocks but Campbell took a sun bearing. He could follow the donga for some miles before he need scale the bank and strike directly, under cover of darkness, for the land-side fence.

So hard and dry was the earth that no trace of Stacks's footsteps showed. But about three miles from the hide, Campbell saw a discarded tin glinting in the slanting light. He hurried to it. It had been recently opened, for the meat inside was still moist. He put down the rucksack and container and ran one finger round the inside of the tin, scooping out a few shreds of meat.

At that moment, there was a very faint sound and almost before Campbell could move a huge boulder hurtled down the steep bank, bouncing, gathering speed with every second. Campbell jumped. The boulder crashed past him. He stared up at the bank but there was nothing. Nothing. The sun glinted in his eyes. He turned to pick up the rucksack and an exclamation of despair was wrung from him. In its mad passage, the boulder had crashed on top of the rucksack and the water container. The container now lay flat and split. A steam-hammer might have crushed it. Campbell ran to it, to all the carefully stored, husbanded water. He fell on his face, thrusting his lips to the jagged metal. On each side, the ground was dark with water.

He sucked up a few mouthfuls, tepid, full of grit and then straightened himself.

Whatever Stacks had done, Campbell still had the diamonds. And then the thought struck him: what of the night march ahead? Under cover of darkness, Stacks would strike again.

Campbell took the last bearing from the sun. He had memorized the route with painstaking care. Soon there would be stars as beacons. A great surge of anger swept over him. The plan had been perfect. It had gone without a hitch . . . except for Stacks.

The light was fading rapidly. A rock one hundred yards ahead of Campbell that had been gilded and red a moment before was now suddenly grey and cold. Colour died from the ground. He could see scarcely a few yards ahead of him. There were three long marches to be done.

Only a man with Campbell's dogged strength and courage, only a man living the closing stage of a dream from which he had never once been free for as many years as he could remember, could have covered those last terrible miles, burdened as he was by the load of diamonds which two men should have carried.

He rested, sleepless, watchful, during the day. He marched at night. He drew together his racked, puffy lips, he willed his legs to move and he made towards the fence. No food. No water.

It was the third night. Only the sound of his weary, dragging feet. The faint gasp of his breath. The cloud of dust at his passage, his only companion. Silence. And somewhere, ahead or behind him, in that immensity of desert, Stacks waited his opportunity. . . .

It was still dark when he came within sight of the fence. He reeled, swayed and rolled as if drunk and even the dim outline of the fence was an illusion, oscillating wildly.

He never heard Stacks. His brain was too dead. Instead of hearing was a thumping in his ears and his sight quivering and jumping. All he knew was that he was suddenly flung on his face as he passed a clump of rocks; there was a dead, numbing pain at the back of his head and then the precious rucksack was wrenched from his grasp.

For some moments he lay still, stunned. In the light of the stars he saw Stacks running towards the fence. Campbell forced himself to his knees, then he, too, was running. How he forced his cramped, dead limbs into motion he had no knowledge, but run he did, and Stacks heard him. Twenty yards behind Stacks, Campbell saw the big man dive into a burrow like some monstrous rabbit, but in his haste Stacks must have slipped, for there was a flash like the back-fire of an exhaust at night, and Campbell saw Stacks's body arch horribly and fling itself backwards and lie in the sand and grit, feet inside the fence.

Campbell ran towards him. Stacks was dead. The rucksack lay beside him. Campbell went towards the fence. Beneath it was the tunnel that Stacks had made and close at hand three tins of food and a water-container. Campbell picked up the container, shook it; but it was empty. Greedy, thriftless to the last, Stacks had finished the water.

It was still dark when Campbell came through the fence. The alarm might have been given by the charge on the fence and he ran, stumbling, half doubled up, away from the fence, with never a backward glance.

An hour after daylight, miles from the fence, like a man seeing a mirage, Campbell caught sight of the truck like a swaying, distorted pinhead against the immense canvas of dun-coloured ground. He fell to his knees, staggered up again and plodded on. Despite Slacks, despite everything, he had done it. He had justified himself. A little strength came to him with the words and he ran for a few paces, then slowed as the truck grew larger.

Landorn saw a thin, short man, bent nearly double with fatigue, beard matted, naked almost, so torn were his clothes. A man whose legs were knock-kneed with exhaustion. A man who by some miracle had accomplished the impossible.

For an instant he wondered where Stacks was and then he laughed, for he imagined that Campbell had done to him what he now intended doing to Campbell.

Landorn came forward from the truck to meet Campbell and too late Campbell saw the look on his thin-lipped face, only vaguely felt the blow that Landorn struck him, but as he fell he managed to twist the rucksack beneath him.

Campbell lay, partly stunned, partly feigning. This was a new enemy, unexpected, unprovided for, that the remnant of his strength must fight. Landorn stood over him, then cautiously leaned forward and tried to roll him off the sack. Campbell waited. There must be a moment when Landorn's greed would overcome his caution.

Landorn lost patience. For hours he had been waiting for this moment. He kicked Campbell and, as he reached down for the rucksack, Campbell wrenched the revolver from Landorn Landorn kicked out again and his boot struck Campbell's head.

When Campbell saw him again, he

was twenty yards away, running towards the truck.

Campbell steadied himself, rolling on to his stomach. Blinking his eyes, he raised the revolver in both hands and fired. The first, the second shot went wide, but the roar of the third shot was still blasting his ears when he saw Landorn stagger, side-stepping like a dancer, and fall to his knees.

Campbell dragged himself upright. After an eternity he reached Landorn. The man was dead.

The ground swayed and swung as Campbell reached down and took the sack from him. He blinked until earth and sky stopped spinning. Gradually, as his vision cleared, the truck became distinct. Campbell walked unsteadily towards it and dropped, crawling to the front of the truck. Rolling beneath the radiator, opening the water-cock, he let a little of the hot, rusty water trickle into his mouth. Then he hauled himself into the cab and turned the ignition key.

He had made it. He repeated that over and over to himself. Despite Stacks's and Landorn's treachery. Of the three, he alone had survived and it seemed to make the dream one with reality, for in the dream he had been alone. He stretched out a hand and touched the sack beside him on the seat.

THERE were 190 miles to cover to Puigi. He glanced at the petrol gauge. Half full. Enough for the distance. Short of a total breakdown he was as good as there.

In a horrible, croaking voice, he began to sing.

He was steering erratically, swaying from left to right. The truck bounced over a large stone, nearly throwing Campbell from the cab.

He swore, cursing himself and settled down to drive. The pulse of the engine echoed his song.

Two hours later, when he had covered ninety miles, the truck coughed once, like an apologetic old man, and stopped. So sudden was the cessation of the movement that Campbell slumped forward over the steering-wheel. He pressed the starter. It whirred but no life came from the engine.

Campbell climbed stiffly from the cab and opened the bonnet. He touched the plunger on the carburettor. Dry. In sudden panic he ran to the tank at the back and saw a neatly drilled hole, a few inches from the bottom.

Glancing back, over the sun-dried earth, was a thin, straggling trail where the petrol had leaked, and Campbell remembered the two shots which he had fired before he hit Landorn. He might as well have put them into himself. THE END

DIGBY

Continued from page 21

it was not a pretty smile. He led a left to the mark. Digby blocked it, tried to duck the right cross, took that on the side of his head; painful, perhaps painful to Balgersho's knuckles, too.

Digby tried his own left. It didn't connect, but it told him something—that he had a big advantage in reach. That and thirty pounds in weight. He made his plan: I'll hold him off with my left. I'll lead and lead and lead for the body till I wear him out—then take the opening.

Sound in theory, not good in practice. His enemy was far too quick; he feinted, came in underneath, and the next thing was *smack-smack* to the jaw. Digby's world swam round and he was sitting on the grass. He shook his head to clear it. "Get up!" Fiona urged.

"Had enough?" asked Hamish, weaving around on the balls of his feet. "Scared?"

"You'll see!" He was O.K. again. First tactics wrong; the swine was far too good. What now? Only one hope—slug it out.

He went after him in furious onslaught, raining blows against Balgersho's body, giving him no time, connecting once, and then again to the face, taking a nasty one to the stomach and another, a low blow, and red lights shimmered up before Digby's eyes; but he was cold, too, he was calculating: he had seen something. Fight foul, was it? O.K.

He sobbed for breath and showered arm-heavy rights and lefts, driving Balgersho backwards by sheer weight. Got to be now, he thought, or I'm dead meat.

What he had seen was a cluster of six-inch grassy tussocks beyond Balgersho. He crowded in close. It was the only chance. Balgersho's left heel caught the first stiff clump of grass; he tripped, recovered, but not soon enough. He was still off-balance when his right heel came against the second tussock. His guard spread open. Digby was there. He used his right. It was a far better blow than the one he had dealt the envious McIntoon. Lord Balgersho finally stopped smiling; he subsided and lay asleep. Digby sucked his knuckles; they were torture.

FIONA ran up. "Oh, Digby!" she cried. "You did it for us. You avenged the massacre. You wiped it off the slate. Four hundred years to the very day. Och, Prissitulchan!" She put her hand on his right shoulder. It was the accolade.

"You fouled him!" Madeleine was kneeling beside Balgersho. The peer began to stir. She looked over her shoulder. "You did it on purpose. I saw you." Her voice was clear and cold and angry.

"He hit me low," said Digby, not denying the accusation, not at all ashamed, but wanting to make that clear. "Didn't he, Fiona?"

Fiona made no reply. She was staring at Hamish Balgersho, who had opened his eyes and now sat up. She was staring at him with an extraordinary fixity. Her bosom rose and fell under the silk. She was mistress of this situation, as of every other.

"You're a bloody old scoundrel," said the wicked baron. "But I must admit you pack a hefty punch." He fingered his jaw with a rueful tenderness. Then he transferred attention to Fiona. He gave her back what she gave him, which was a stare of challenging intensity. It went on through potent seconds.

"My elephant queen," he said at last in that mocking, superior way of his. "What's on your little mind?"

Fiona panted, but otherwise was still, coiled like a tigress just before the spring. She's going to kill him, Digby thought. She's going to administer the *coup de grâce*.

"Well?" said Hamish, looking up at her. "Have you seen sense?"

"We beat you," she said. "We had our vengeance. Och, Hamish!"

Now the astounding thing occurred. Fiona dived upon him. In a sense it

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was attack, but by no means the attack that Digby had expected. She wrestled with her rival chieftain on the good green grass; she covered him with kisses. Digby watched in baffled stupor.

Finally Balgersho freed himself. "That'll do," he said.

"Och, Hamie," she sighed. "To think I never guessed you were the one I loved. My hielan' laddie, and the feud's all over."

"Don't call me Hamie. Above all, stop using these barbarous expressions."

"And don't you call me Queenie," she gave back with heat.

But this masterful villain clipped her into his arms again, turned her over and spanked her on the kilted bottom. "If I want to call you Queenie, I shall call you Queenie," he remarked. "From now on I'm the boss. When I say 'Do this,' you bloody well do it."

"I'll not do a thing without marriage," she said stoutly with a quaver.

"Marriage it shall be, and the sooner the better. But no more philandering, Fiona. Enough's enough. Your salad days are over."

Her salad days with Digby Ross, the man who paid up and looked a fool and fought her battles and won a bridegroom for her and was cast away without even a murmur of regret or thanks.

But, you know, Digby thought, I never, even at the wildest moments, I never liked to think of marriage with Fiona. Think of her at the staff Christmas party. Think of her wearing a kilt in New York City. Think of her arrogance with directors' wives. Just think of her tantrum language. No, it's a funny thing, but my heart's not broken. I'm just the faintest bit relieved. . . .

Hamish stopped. He looked at Madeleine and Digby, shook his head several times, said: "Oh, my God!" and actually looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry for such an exhibition, Digby, old boy," he mumbled. "But I've wanted this beautiful beast for so long—as I told you, didn't I?"

He stood up and moved a little distance from Fiona. She edged after him, utterly his humble slave. What an amazing metamorphosis!

Digby wanted to get away out of this mad situation. "I believe you have the Cadillac," he said coldly to Madeleine.

"It's behind the house," she said, nodding at Balgersho's prefab. They walked side by side in prickling hostility.

"I say, old boy," called Hamish. "Do you mind if we hop a lift as far as the Birks? There's no gas left in my bloody kite."

THEY reached the car. Seating was not a problem. Digby kept his eyes away from the rear-view mirror. There were limits to a man's forbearance, a man's capacity for cuckoldry even of this peculiar nature.

At the Birks, Digby changed hurriedly out of his kilt, into his tweed suit. The quicker he was away from the happy couple the better.

"Good luck, my children!" he said.

Balgersho took his arm. "Can I have a word with you, Digby?"

"Why, sure." They moved away.

"Look, old boy, now that I've hooked this woman finally, I don't want to let the grass grow under my feet. I have a good many pals of this kind or that, not very steady characters on the whole, apt to put squibs in the clergyman's cassock. I hardly like to ask you. . . ." Lord Balgersho seemed embarrassed.

"Ask away."

"The point is, do you think you could stand the thought of being my best man? It's a sort of impertinent question to ask a chap of such sterling virtue, but I do wish you would. I know what would happen if I got old Pranger Potter."

"But I'm going next week." Best man? He did like the guy, though, didn't he, unaccountably?

"We can have the wedding next week, before you go. Any time you say. Please, old boy."

"Well, O.K.," said Digby. "Thank you. It's a very great compliment."

"Splendid!" Hamish slapped him on the back. "One other thing," he went on *sotto voce*, "and none of my business, but I couldn't help noticing a certain coolness between you and Madeleine. I just want to tell you that I think she's the most attractive, courageous girl I've ever met. If it wasn't for my inexplicable passion for old Queenie. . . ."

"Thanks," said Digby. "Well, we must get going."

In the car, he said to Madeleine after a while: "Hamish asked me to be his best man."

"He did, did he?" said Madeleine, not very nicely.

"He also told me you were the most attractive, courageous girl he'd ever met."

MADELEINE wept. He had heard her cry often enough before, but never like this. She gave herself over to weeping, while he drove slower and slower.

"Oh, Madeleine," he said. He couldn't stand it. He put his hand on hers. Poor Madeleine. What a billy-goat he had been, wooing another woman before her eyes. "What's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" She turned on the seat, eyes swollen, cheeks wet and blotched. It was damnably touching. "What's wrong is that I meet the one really attractive man in all my life, and you have to go and have a crazy fight and spoil everything and let her get her hooks in before I can do more than kiss him."

"Madeleine! Really, Madeleine!" He was profoundly shocked. It was downright immoral to talk that way.

She stopped crying, wiped her face, and shook with occasional after-spasms as they drove down and over McIntoon bridge and past the village and up to Glendrogan. "Really, Madeleine!" she mimicked. "There goes Prissy Ross again."

He dropped his wife at the front door and parked the Cadillac under the copper beech.

"Digby P.!"

It was the colonel, admiring gentians. "Well, young feller," he said, "how did you get on?"

Digby gave a résumé, expurgated.

"So you knocked him out, eh? Wonderful! Marvellous! You're a doughty old warrior, Digby P. Then I suppose Fiona took a knife to the rascal, or spat on him at the very least?"

"No," said Digby cattily. "She jumped on him. They're engaged to be married. The wedding's next week, in fact."

This information knocked the colonel on his beam ends. He blanched and all the looping veins stood out; he mouthed words and could not say them.

"Well, what must be must be," he

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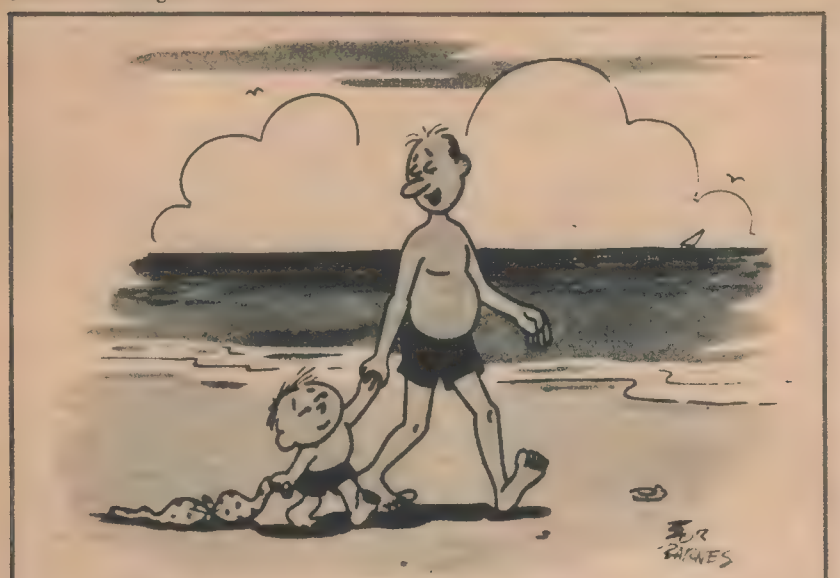

"Now show Daddy exactly where you found it . . ."

said at last. "No good kicking against the pricks, as my dear wife used to tell me when I was impatient in my younger days. Nowadays I'm not one whit impatient, but I *am* a frightful scoundrel. So is everyone except that sanctimonious prig, McLean. He's a good man, I admit, but——"

"Lachlan McLean's a splendid fellow," Digby interrupted. "The best type of younger clergyman, I would say."

"If I may venture a wretched opinion of my own," said the colonel bitterly, "it is that this milksop priest is a pain in the veritable neck. By the way, he has asked for an interview this evening at six of all hours. I wonder what he's after. It could be the usual charitable spiel. Bad enough. But I have a far worse suspicion."

"What?"

"That he's going to ask for Elspeth's lovely hand. In which case I'll give him a scare he won't forget."

"Why, Colonel?"

"First, because she is needed here. Bridget Moloney shows restive signs already. I'm a lonely old chap, Digby P. I have to have someone to see to the house, and Elspeth's better than nothing. Second, I don't like the earnest creature. He offends me. . . . Ah, here he comes. I hope it's only about the Scouts."

But the young minister, stooped over handlebars, peddling fast uphill, looked like a man spurred on by a purpose more consuming than Boy Scouts.

"Good evening, Colonel Galbraith. Good evening, Mr. Ross." Propping his bicycle, bobbing a bow to each of them.

"Hallo, Padre," said the colonel. "How many souls have you saved today?"

The young man winced at this Galbraithism, stared down at his large black boots. He was in an emotional simmer, no question of it. He was all brewed up.

DIGBY had put in a word for Lachlan. He had no wish to stay for the fateful interview. "I think I'll go take a bath," he said. "Be seeing you, Lachlan."

"Don't leave us, I beg of you, Digby P."

"Oh, please stay, Mr. Ross."

Both gazed at him anxiously. It was awkward.

"Well, Padre," said the colonel. "Is it extortion again in a holy cause? Or have the Scouts been getting the Guides into trouble?"

Lachlan gave a jump, flushed, opened his mouth to speak, closed it. His eyes flickered all over the place.

The dirty old so-and-so, Digby thought. He caught Lachlan's eye and frowned. *Do what I told you,* he willed him. *Be tough!*

The minister drew breath and exploded in a hollow charge of indignation: "I very much object to that remark, Colonel Galbraith. I suppose you say such things just to be clever and make fun of the finest youth movements in the world. And you always making daft jokes like *How many souls have I saved today.* Well, if you want to know, I haven't saved any, and I know one soul that isn't worth saving, and that's yours, Colonel Galbraith. You're a thorn in my flesh is the truth, and I'm fair fed up, God forgive me."

The minister had gone into battle with a beginner's fury. The colonel was for a moment taken aback.

"Well, I mean to say, young feller, you can't speak to me like that, you know——"

LACHLAN brushed this aside with a large hand. He stooped to stare into the colonel's piggy eyes; they shifted.

"I've not come about the Scouts or the Guides or the Jumble Sale, Colonel Galbraith," he hissed. "I've come to ask for Miss Elspeth's hand in marriage, if she'll have me."

The colonel made one of his lightning rallies. "Indeed, sir? Pray tell me, have you reason to believe that my daughter is enamoured of you? Have you made advances to her?"

"No, Colonel Galbraith, and I don't know at all what she thinks about me: and it wouldn't be easy to find out, considering the sarcastic remarks you're aye making whenever I'm near Miss Elspeth. You're a mocker of everything decent, including love, Colonel Galbraith." Lachlan seemed to have taken Digby's advice too literally.

"Ah, love," sighed the colonel, not offended. "That isn't true, my boy." He cleared his throat and said severely: "But man cannot live on love alone. How shall I express the matter delicately? What dough or dibs or onions . . .? That is, as a doting father it is my duty to ask: could you support my daughter in the manner to which she is accustomed?"

"No, Colonel Galbraith. I've nothing but my stipend."

"And I fancy you'd expect a handsome little dowry from the despised father."

"I would not," said McLean vehemently. "I love Miss Elspeth for herself. I wouldn't let her bring a penny."

"But, my dear boy," pleaded the chameleon colonel. "Surely you wouldn't begrudge a small allowance? Do persuade him, Digby P."

Digby had been amused and embarrassed by these proceedings. "You'll have to agree, Lachlan. It's a father's right to make provision for his daughter."

The Reverend Lachlan McLean shook his anxious head. "I couldn't touch it," he said. "Not but that what Miss Elspeth had for herself would be my business. But the like of the housekeeping and every other expense would be mine alone."

"You have to make concessions, you know," said Digby. "No strings

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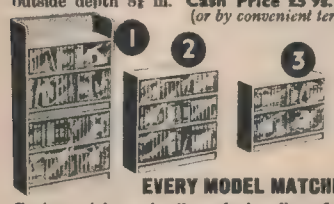

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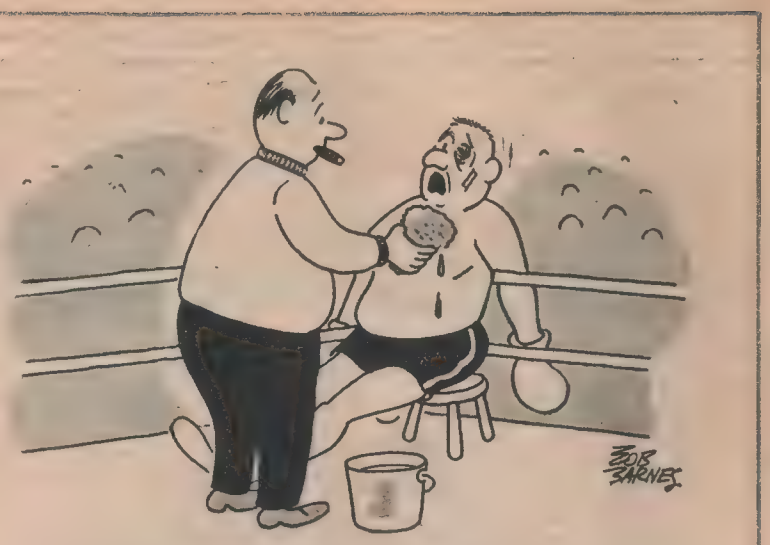

"Couldn't I forget strategy and just fight for my life?"

attached, no favours from Daddy is the important thing, eh, Colonel?"

"Hmmm!" gruffed Galbraith.

The minister drew himself up to his spindly height. "Sir," he said, "may I pay my formal addresses to Miss Elspeth?"

There was a long pause while the colonel stared across the glen. Clouds were building. "Oh, hell's bells," he wept at last. "Go to it, boy, and don't thank me, thank this interfering busybody, Ross."

"Thank you, Colonel Galbraith. Och, thanks." Lachlan pumped his hand and strode towards the front door. Digby went, too. "I never knew he had such a good side to him. It just shows you shouldn't judge people. I wonder where Miss Elspeth is?"

"I'll see if I can find her. Do quit saying Miss Elspeth. Don't be so humble, Lachlan."

"Oh, dear," said the minister. "I don't have the moral fibre. Could you be there to help me?"

"No," Digby said firmly. "I'll tell her why you've come. More than that I will not do."

He went upstairs and on to the landing. Elspeth's door was shut. He knocked.

She was sitting at the open window, finishing the red sweater. Oh, my God, what a plain girl! "'Lo," she said, as clipped as ever. "Gathering a success?"

"I guess so," Digby said. "It was a parcel of surprises." He paused. "Lachlan McLean is here to see you."

Elspeth blushed. It was not a beautiful blush, as Fiona's or Madeleine's, but it did give warmth.

"He's in the smoking-room," said Digby, and departed hurriedly. As he crossed the hall en route to the north wing, he thought: I hope she doesn't make his life a hell and nag the poor guy and drive him to drink or worse.

IN his bath, still in the same moody state of mind, he thought: it was disgusting the way Madeleine spoke about me spoiling her chances with that guy. It was just plain indecent. And what about me? It's different for a man. . . . I'll say to her after dinner, I'll say: *Madeleine, I'd like you to fly home right away. We might try to make a go of it again later if that's your wish. I shall be at your disposal after the wedding.*

He pulled at the plug chain with his big toe and lay till the water had gurgled out. He was stiff and sore and jealous. To hell with all women, he thought. He would make a date with old MacLagan, and shoot or stalk or fish all day.

Digby and MacLagan were on the river early. He killed a ten-pound salmon in the Bannock, and he said to MacLagan, the old notion striking him again: "Would you mind if we tried for a grouse and a stag to make the three? I read about it before I came, and it seems to be a mild fixation with me."

MacLagan said: "I will do whatever Mr. Ross fancies. I'd like fine for Mr. Ross to have good memories of Scotland."

They drove up the hill road, stopping to shoot not one grouse but a brace. They were far away from women, but it was not possible for him now to walk through heather without being aware of one woman. She was the has-been; she had passed beyond his ken. Fiona had gotten him into more mischief in whatever number of days it was than he had found in all the rest of his life. She was indeed dumb, a shade unscrupulous, the child of wayward passions, but she had brought him closer to the earth.

Behind them to the south, grey rain-clouds rolled over the glen. "This is the real Highland weather," MacLagan said. "I doubt we're to get a soak."

MUCH later, Digby shot his red deer, not one stag but two, both ten-pointers. And they were soaked. But, soaked or not, now that he'd got two grouse and two stags, Digby wanted another salmon, the double hat-trick. And hours later, when he had it, and MacLagan had put aside restraint to congratulate him heartily, they turned for home.

And now again Digby was moody. He had done what he set out to do, a thing that few people ever did succeed in doing. He was not so pleased as he should have been. His thoughts were off in another direction. *Wouldn't it be a good idea*—drawing her aside according to plan after dinner last night—*wouldn't it be a good idea if you took a plane back in the next day or two? It's awkward here, isn't it, Madeleine, with things as they are between us? What do you think?* Very conciliatory, but she just laughed in my face. *Go home yourself, Hot Shot!*

I don't know what's come over her, he thought. Well, I suppose it's the infatuation for Hamish. Women are a mystery to me. You look after them all the long years, and then they turn on you, and use sneering expressions. Hot Shot!

Digby lay in his dark room in the north wing. He had come early to bed because he was tired after a great day on the hill and by the river, and because the evening atmosphere at Glendrogan had more than ever been that compendium of malice and mockery and bad old corn which hung aura-like around the colonel. Madeleine egged him on; Elspeth knitted a whole pair of socks with a new light in her eyes; Digby drank whisky to dispel the chills and to endure the persiflage. "You know, Digby P.," Galbraith had said, "you'll always be my hero, my Daniel Boone in shining armour."

At which Madeleine giggled in a crazy fashion and ran out to the hall. In a minute she was back with a daub of lipstick on the tip of her nose, the colonel's Scotch hat on her head, a tartan rug around her middle. "Prissitulchan at my side!" she shouted, and marched up and down the

room with her chest out making dreadful bagpipe noises while Galbraith laughed himself into an admiring jelly.

That was an hour ago. Since then the rain had stopped, a breeze grew to rattle the loose window, and it was a cool, dark night for sleep. But Digby could not sleep.

He tried to think of America and business, but the fact remained that his immediate world was here, not there, that he had agreed to be best man at Fiona's wedding early next week, that meanwhile he had time and too much time to ponder other things.

Now, he thought judicially, take Madeleine. She used to sneer at my poor brains. Well, now, in Scotland, she's a different woman. I thought at first it was an act to get me back. She must have come for that. But she's really changed. I believe it's some primitive surging urge. This hunting and kissing and dancing on the lawn and dumb remarks and risking her neck in planes and crying her heart out about Balgersho and calling me a poor old red-nosed sucker.

I used to be irritated by her, and the last night in New York she provoked me beyond endurance. But why is it now, since yesterday particularly, that she makes me seethe? She used to bore me; now she maddens me. It's insufferable. We've got to have a showdown. But she won't speak to me in the daytime; she never will. It's now or never. It's my duty to make one more effort, say to her: *Madeleine, you're making me most unhappy;* or say to her: *Madeleine, I know my duty if you don't know yours. I'm ready to try again, if only for appearance's sake. We mustn't parade our differences before Galbraith.* Just a brief whispered talk and try to get her sympathy if she has any sanity left, and tiptoe back again, and nobody the wiser.

There was no moon, but the sky had cleared. He groped for his moccasin slippers. He put on his dressing-gown. He prowled along the corridor. He was a silent mover, a proved hunter, a credit to MacLagan. But what would MacLagan say? MacLagan would say: "Mr. Ross is not wise, I'm thinking."

He tiptoed up the side of the staircase, hardly any creaks. He stood on the landing. He heard sonorous snores from the colonel's room, nothing from the others.

He turned the handle slowly, very slowly; it made no noise at all. He pushed. The door was locked. He released it carefully and stalked back down the way he had come. She locked it, he thought, grim and angry. She barred this one last road to understanding.

Digby was a determined man at any time, a man spurred now by insomnia. He did not hesitate. He went past the kitchen, past Bridget Moloney's bedroom, unlocked the back door quietly, stepped into the cold night, and walked down the path by the north wing. An owl hooted, the light, rapacious bird of night.

He stood below Madeleine's open window. It was the easiest climb imaginable, a mere twenty feet or thereabouts. The stones of the wall at that corner were laid one jutting out six inches and the next one in, the kind of wall an active spinster of sixty might succeed in scaling. To Digby, in tiptop physical condition after a fortnight of mountain scrambles, the thing was child's play.

He did not pause. He swarmed up, gripped the sash, swung his left leg over and stepped for the first time with a slight thud into Madeleine's room. It was only as his night-accustomed eyes saw her sit bolt upright in bed and put her hands to her head, and she emitted an ear-shattering scream, that he realized what he had done.

"It's only me, Madeleine," he whispered hoarsely. "I had to have a talk."

"Go away, you horrible man! Go away!" Then she began to sob, the racking sobs of shock.

Doors opening, the sound of feet, a light on the landing, the colonel's excited shouts: "Where is it? What the hell's happened? What's wrong? Oh, my God, what a fearful yell!"

Imperturbable Elspeth: "It was Madeleine."

She sobbed on. "Sssh!" Digby hissed. He could knife himself and her; he could fall dead. "Say you had a nightmare."

The colonel hammering on the door. "My dear child, what's wrong. What happened, Madeleine?" He sounded much upset. He loved her dearly.

"Nightmare," she wailed at the top of the register. Now she started to laugh, wild sobs of laughter.

"There, there," cried the colonel. "You poor girl. Oh, Nanda Devi, what can I do? It's serious." He rattled the door in distress. "Elspeth, go and fetch her husband, fetch that idiot Digby P.! Quick, girl, quick! We'll have to break the door down. Oh, my God, there, there, now, Madeleine." Elspeth pattering down the staircase.

"I'm here, Colonel," said Digby loudly. "I heard her and I came along."

"Come back, Elspeth! He's here already." After that a pregnant silence beyond the door while Madeleine's sobs and laughter grew less desperate, less frequent, subsided and almost stopped. She lay on her side in bed. Oh, Lord above, he thought. What have I done?

"I'm all right, Farquie dear," she gulped. "I had a horrible dream. Better now."

"You'll call if you need me?" growled the colonel. "Promise?"

"Yes." Madeleine gave a long, tremendous snuffle and was still.

After that there were mutterings from outside, doors closed, and the old house was quiet. Digby looked down at Madeleine with penitence and self-reproach. She turned to look at him over her left shoulder. In the dimness he could see the soft, familiar feminine curve of her jawbone and the unfamiliar tears on her face. She *is* beautiful, he thought. She's damnably sad and beautiful.

"Are you crazy?" she whispered, not sadly but with anger. "Are you crazy or drunk again or what?"

"Crazy." He nodded his head miserably. "And I couldn't sleep." Nod. "Everything's hell." He was sorry for himself. "I had to talk to you."

"So you climb in my window after midnight and give me the worst fright. . . ."

"I'm sorry, Madeleine. I had to talk to you."

"What's there to talk about?"

But he couldn't think. What exactly had he come to say? She was leaning on her elbow, staring at him. She was wearing a white diaphanous thing. It was chilly, too, and the waning moon must have risen, because he could see her face and more of her quite clearly now.

Digby shivered in his dressing-gown. "Why d'you have to team up with Hamish and Galbraith and ride me all day every day?"

She looked at him for a long time, not answering, until a last after-sob racked her head and shoulders; she frowned at that. "I haven't had a wink of sleep. Do go away."

"I'll go." But he hesitated. Why

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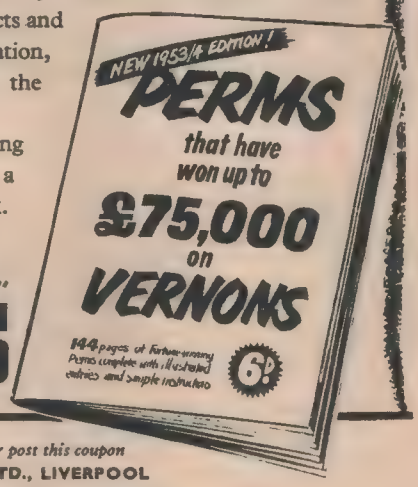

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hadn't she slept? "You aren't taking it too hard about that guy Hamish, are you? He's an unscrupulous . . ."

"He's a man, at least. Better than being a pompous prig."

"You do hate me, don't you?"

"I just despise you."

"Good night, then." Digby turned away. He was low, not angry. "I just came to tell you I couldn't stand it."

"Couldn't stand what?"

"Not being able to sleep, and you jeering at me, and it stinks parading our differences under the same roof for Galbraith to see."

She sighed and lay down again. "I know. So it was just because of appearances?"

"No." The real reason why he had come struck through his careful, demented edifice of self-deception. He went to the bed and stood over her. Madeleine stared up at him. She still hadn't bothered to cover her top half. It was cold. He shivered. Should he say it or not say it?

"I came because I was damn' lonely and damn' jealous, if you want to know," he muttered disagreeably.

She smiled. Wasn't it amazing you could have been married to this girl for ten years? "Poor, frozen Digby. Come in beside me and get warm. We can talk better."

He put his head into her shoulder. The skin was cold, then it was warm. Everything was warm and comforting.

"You gave me an awful scare," she said.

"I must have been crazy—desperate, I guess. I'm sorry, Madeleine."

"You're a strange man."

She was not like Madeleine used to be, not like Fiona, either. She had some sense and a sense of humour. But never comparisons. Oh no, never comparisons.

"Tell me why you came over," he said.

"Why do you think? To rescue you from that woman's clutches. Then I changed my mind."

"Because of Hamish?"

"Yes. But it was only because he was terribly attractive in a bad way I'd never known before. He did something to me."

"What did he do to you?"

"Nothing. That's true, too, darling, except kiss me. What did she do to you?"

"Nothing." Shame on Digby; wise Digby, whether she believed him or not. "You've become a new sort of woman since you came here. I wouldn't know it was you."

MADELEINE stirred closer in his arms. "I didn't mean it about you being pompous and priggish, darling. You're almost human now at last. That's the absurd thing."

"Almost?"

She giggled. "Yes, almost. You even make quite good jokes."

"Say altogether."

"Altogether if you love me, and never look at that wench again. Promise?"

"Promise."

"Am I as nice a dish as she is?"

Take care, Digby told himself. "Nobody in the world could be as nice now as you. Not ten Fionas or ten anybodies."

She laughed. "I'd like to keep you here always. I know you'll be the same old ponderous paragon after a week in that office. Is it true you made your speech at the Gathering in *verse*? I can't believe it. You didn't write a poem, did you, darling?"

"Sort of."

"Can I see it?"

He shook his head. She certainly could not. If she saw it she would laugh, which would be the beginning again. "No."

"Please, Digby. I'd love to read your little rhyme in kilts." Then she gave him a little hug. "You know, darling, one of the nicest things about being together again is that we can conspire against these people. I bet Farquie's listening in now."

"He thinks I'm a wife-beater."

"He says I'm a typical American woman. That's why he dotes on me."

"It's nearly three. I'll have to go."

But it was later than three when Digby returned to his north wing by the inner route.

"Think of the bright side. School starts when—September?"

Next morning, there was a stately formality in the colonel's bow. "Good morning, Ross," he said, and continued helping himself to bacon, eggs and devilled kidneys.

"What's on today?" asked Digby.

"No more than usual. The same old round, the mundane task. I shall have a look at my Lilium Pardalinum Gigantium, my giant beast. He might be flowering after that rain. He'd better hurry if he isn't going to miss the bus. Oh dear, the thought of another year gone by. I wish I was confident of heaven. Do you feel confident, Digby P.? Do you think you'll force your inimitable way through Peter's gate?"

Digby had seen Galbraith before breakfast, snooping for footprints along the path below Madeleine's window. "No," he said. "Neither me nor you, Colonel. Let's face it."

Here came Madeleine humming down the stairs. She couldn't sing, but she had a deep, good hum; she danced into the dining-room and said: "Good morning, everyone. No, don't get up, Farquie."

She kissed him on his bald pate from behind. It might have been any other Highland morning.

"Gracious, you smell good, my dear," said the colonel, delighted. "Help yourself to absolutely everything." She went to the sideboard.

"Elspeth, where's the marmalade?"

"Moloney's opening a new one. I offered, but she said get out." Elspeth smiled. Love had worked wonders for her. She no longer glowered. Her hair was in rude waves. She wore a thick dust of powder on dumpling cheeks and gashes of lipstick. She was full of secrets.

Madeleine came back with egg and bacon. Her eyes slid across Digby. He was mad about her.

"I'm sorry about last night," she said. "I must have given you such a scare, Farquie, but it was my nightmare, the same one I've had ever since I was a little girl." She shuddered. "Oh, it's so awful. I can't bear to think of it."

The colonel leaned across and patted her hand and said: "Oh, my poor child, I do feel for you. You must have a quiet day and rest your nerves."

After breakfast, Digby waited for the colonel on the lawn. It was a brisk morning, and he could taste the early autumn of the Scottish Highlands, not quite here but coming. Colonel Galbraith had been interviewing Bridget Moloney in the smoking-room. He came out now and shut the french window behind him.

They walked together in the Giant Lily direction.

"I do like that woman," the colonel said after a while. "I'm drawn to her. But she says she gets lonelier and lonelier in the north wing, and next week when you leave the room above, it would be worse. Seems to like you, too, Digby P. God knows why women like you. God knows I wouldn't if I was a woman. Well, she's lonely, for one thing, and she says the kitchen's outmoded, and——" The colonel stopped in his tracks.

"Look!" he screamed. "Just look! My beast has bloomed." He broke into a shuffling trot through bracken and nettles. "Isn't he wonderful? Isn't he the most splendid lily you ever saw?"

It was one single flower among closed buds, truly a splendid bloom, vermilion-red shading to orange to deep yellow in the centre with dark spots. It stood quite alone on its stout green stalk, vivid under a shaft of sun in the dark wood. The colonel reached up a reverent finger to touch, then stood in silence.

"Very fine," said Digby, and expressed suitable admiration.

AFTER a while, leaving the colonel still crooning over the lily, he strolled back to the house. He paused in the porch, listening. "I did want a grand, big wedding," Fiona was saying. "I mean, after all, Madeleine, it's the most important day in a girl's life when she finally gives herself to a man, which is why big weddings are the right thing even if you're absolutely broke like Hamish and me, but he just says: 'Getting spliced up is all that matters.' Anyway, I'm jolly well wearing the satin wedding dress Nanny's making. Nanny's terribly pleased. She says she knew all along that Hamie was the one I loved. But I do think he's mean the way he bosses me, boss, boss, boss, just as if I was a concubine or something. Don't you think so, Madeleine?"

"I know," said Madeleine in a soothing, cosy tone. "But they're all the same, Fiona. Now, take my Digby. . . ."

"Oh, *Digby's* different. Digby's always so kind and considerate, just like an uncle or something, or perhaps he's too good-looking to be an uncle really."

My God, Digby thought. What's she going to come out with next?

To be concluded next week

THE BLINDING DARKNESS

Continued from page 12

bees caught them when they had thirty yards to go. It was no use batting at them, or flailing his hat round his head, but he did it just the same, because it made him feel better. Mary's face and body turned black, brown and shapeless.

Then himself—a blanket of red-hot fire wrapped itself round him and clung firm. It was not as bad as the other, though, the pin and the searchlight, and he had his hand tight over his eyes. They were in his ears, stinging; the noise was unbelievable. And the myriads of their clinging feet, and the myriad beating of their wings, crawled on his skin more insistent and purposeful than their myriad stings.

He tripped and crashed into the water, holding his hat. It was ice cold, fast and deep, and tugged at his clothes.

Now the water: every muscle in him strained to answer the fighting message from his brain. He *would* not drown, he *would* live, and save himself, and save her.

He stayed under and scraped the bees off his face—he'd have to come up soon, and they'd be there. He surfaced in a broken eddy for a great gulp of air, and in a flash they were thick on his head and nose—twenty in his mouth. He sank, spluttering, swallowed some bees and spat out the rest.

Mary had come up with him; he had seen her face, pockmarked but not yet swollen, for a fraction of a second before the bees had pounced again. How many stings to kill—seven or eight hundred? The last man caught this way had over three thousand in him when he was picked up, but he was very dead.

UP again, with his hand over his mouth this time, and his tongue beginning to swell. The water was getting shallower; he could just touch the bottom. Down again, up again, still clutching the brim of his felt hat. Near the surface he lay back and held the hat over his face. The bees were drumming so hard outside, so many thousands piled on to the hat, that they were stopping up the ventilation holes and his hands holding it had numbed with the continuous prickling, burning sting, sting, sting. He felt good.

In a minute he knew that the water was quite shallow. He could sit, submerged except for his nostrils, holding the hat over his face and bumping gently down with the stream. He squinted sideways through the eyelet holes—nothing to see: bees. After twenty more minutes he could get an occasional glimpse of Mary's hat downstream, a few yards away. She was doing the same thing: she was a good girl, fighting, too. He wanted to fight, everything—this first.

The new pains, the million little burns over his back and stomach and loins, the flames in his ears and mouth, were a challenge—a goading that would mean death to anyone else. But his will shouted: this is life, because it has stung you to fight with a million stings. His hands were nothing but a swollen pulpiness. He could imagine them covered with hundreds of tiny grey-white clots, the bees' entrails dragged out with their stings. Dear, brave, fighting little insects.

The water was numbing cold down in the gorge. The venom began to ache in his body and lay heavy, poisoned fingers on his muscles. There was no strength in his hands, and the hat floated free down the stream. His face was turned up to the sky. Overhead, a white cloud, shaped like a buffalo, moved slowly against the deep blue background.

Then the bees came on to him and he put one hand over his eyes, and tried to see through the cracks between the fingers, stumbling in broken white water towards his hat. They were in his ears and down his neck, a thousand at once, *jab, jab, jab*. His legs would not answer, numbed with the poison of the little fighting people, but his brain struggled joyously.

He splashed on, falling and getting

up again, smiling to himself under the wavering curtain of needle fire.

Mary was on her feet, bees black over her. She had caught his hat. She was stronger than he, always had been. She gave him the hat, they both sank back under the water, and sat there for another hour, two hours, more. The sun went low behind the cliffs and the light seeped through, grey-green and dull—but it was light, for no more bees blocked the ventilation holes. He and Mary had worn out the appalling patience of their enemies—as he would wear down his terrors and miseries. The bees had gone.

He fell under water, and his wife's swollen, startling, shapeless face was over him, her hands under his shoulders. He tried to call her "dearest," to tell her he could stand by himself now, that he would not lean on her—but the words would not come, and poison held his new-found strength in bonds. His tongue filled his mouth, and his lips felt like angry balloons spread across his face; his eyelids were thick, but he could see. A fire burned steadily in his ears.

Mary gasped and groaned as she tugged; he would tell her what it had meant and done, this battle, when he could speak again.

They reached the bank and she lay down beside him, panting.

After an hour he felt a little better; faint and in physical agony, but better. His mind was clearer, and at peace. All the clogging misery of the past weeks was gone. He had fought this, and he would fight the other afterwards—operations and all. She did not love him, but he loved her . . . enough to let her go, free in mind, and happy because she would know her husband was really sane again, and fighting, and could stand alone.

The sun had gone. His pains were a beloved purgatory; he embraced them as a flagellant's flesh crawls with ecstasy under the whip—a present torment for a future calm. He thought of the wonderful bees that did not know selfishness, but only courage.

He thought of Mary's face when he had tried to shoot himself, of her braveness in her duty. A rush of tears came into his sore and burning eyes.

He sat up, trembling uncontrollably, and caught at her hand. He tried to speak, but could not. He sat crouched, jerking and staring, hot tears pouring down his puffed cheeks, clutching at her hand with fingers that would not grip, so he pushed and pulled with his whole arm.

She stared at him, then whispered awkwardly, through bloated lips: "No, no, no. I can't bear it."

Great heavens, she thought he was blind again. . . .

"My dearest darling, I'm not blind now, you know."

But she did not know, and his words had come out only as a garbled moan. She knelt in front of him, a yard from where he lay, speechless, exhausted and weak. He could just see her eyes through the fattened lids in her swollen face, and there was a look of unspeakable compassion and love in them. She was not crying, as he was, but dry-eyed. She sobbed without a sound and held out her hands to him, a little away, not daring to touch him and frighten him in his blindness.

For the second time that day, the long meteor of a suddenly released passion crackled and flashed through his veins.

Fool, fool! A silly, senseless, murdering, blundering fool he'd been. She loved him. There was so much love in her eyes, so much understanding: the things that had always been there, the things he had been too selfish to see for three years.

Then, as he watched, she saw the truth; saw that he was back; saw that he would go forward now, and not alone, but with her.

As his tears dried in the sudden sun of his happiness, hers spouted in a gush on to the stone and, kneeling, she slipped forward across his feet and knees with a long sigh and a twisting of the face that only he and she could know as a smile. THE END

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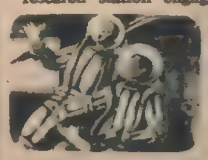

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JOURNEY INTO BRITAIN

Continued from page 9

quarantine station. A tarpaulin is unrolled, bridging, like a celebrity's red carpet, the gap between transporter and the open door of a wooden pen. In the dim interior, between the slats of the transporter's side, an immense pink nose is visible, and, beyond it, enormous opalescent eyes. A moment of high drama has arrived. Quietly, slowly, the transporter's back is lowered. Flanked by blue-overalled attendants, Atok Trojan, a Hereford bull of truly heroic proportions, trots mildly out on to the tarpaulin.

The sensation is considerable. "Eh, here's old Churchill," says a docker. Atok's reputed value ascends, dizzily, moment by moment. "Better than winning the treble chance," says someone. In his white coat, Dick Evans, the shipping agent's animal expert—who next day may be dispatching day-old chicks to Kenya—goes into the pen, talking comfortingly to the vast, shaggy creature as if it were a small dog. Then the ship's foreman gives the signal, and £1,250 worth of bovine virility goes swinging on a derrick towards the allocated apartment in the wooden row constructed on deck.

Huge Dockland Firms

On deck, too, with twelve cattle and two Berkshire pigs all around the sides, fastened down with wire, lie the red steel understructures of railway wagons, fifty feet long, designed to transport wool from the farmlands of New Zealand. And, still to come in the morning, also on the "Advance Notice of Heavy Lifts" list, six new buses for Auckland (which is turning over from trams) also to go on the deck, completing the loading. The Sussex sails at noon.

Below, on the quayside, grey mobile cranes run swiftly to and fro, one man, in the driving seat, moving great bars of steel about as easily and neatly as if they were pencils. Electric bogies bring up more last-minute cargo.

The days are long past when the Master Stevedore or Master Porter was a "little man," touting around for business among the captains, when all he needed was a handcart, and the ships supplied the rope. Increasingly, stevedoring firms are becoming large and complex organizations, port general staffs, marshalling men and fleets of mobile cranes, bogies and fork-lifters, pumps and bagging machines.

What have Liverpool's dockers to say about it? The answer is to be sought behind the dingy chocolate brown front of the Transport and General Workers Union office in South Castle Street. In the shabby upstairs office sits an Irishman from Newry, P. J. O'Hare, leader of Liverpool's 17,000 dock-workers. Newry folk, though on the Ulster side of the Border, are given to declaring their eternal adherence to the Republic, but not Mr. O'Hare. "I'm for the red-white-and-blue," he stoutly declares, and adds, with a touch of defiance, "and there's nothing wrong with that!"

A Roaring Champion

A mountain of a man, who lowers his bulk gingerly into his office chair and speaks in a series of powerful roars, O'Hare, visually at least, is not miscast for the traditional rôle of dockers' champion. "Machines?" he bellows. "Well, they know my views. Machines are to be an aid to men, not to take their places!"

But surely, in the long run. . . .?

"Only the gipsies can tell you that. Of course, you can't hold back progress. We still have a rule in our Rule Book that says no docker must lift a cob of coal higher than his shoulder. Dates from the time they *lifted* the coal up into the ships by hand, a human ladder to the stokehold. Well, that's gone. You can put the brake on, perhaps, but you can't stop progress. . . ."

These days, a Liverpool employer explained to me, dockers tend to divide into two quite distinct generations. There are the old men, the men of the brass and aluminium tallies, whose memories of the hard times before the war are still vivid. And there are the younger chaps who, until just now, have only known the fat years of the war and postwar booms, the men who learned their trade under the protective wing of Ernest Bevin's Dock De-casualization Scheme.

"How do you spell 'marvellous'?"

Temperamentally, the old docker was something of a freelance. He could take a few days off when he felt like it. On the other hand, in the days of the Great Depression, when thousands roamed the Liverpool quaysides looking for work, his freedom was often enough the freedom to half-starve.

Life In The "Pens"

The new dockers' life is very different. He has always behind him the "fall-back"—the basic £4 8s. a week he draws whether there is any work for him or not. But to draw that he must have his book stamped twice a day "A.P."—Attendance Proved—at his area control point.

At 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. each day these control points are the focus of the life and work of the docks, as the Pier Head is of the larger life of the town. They are a dozen or so strategically placed brick-built halls, divided by rails into stands for the several categories of dock worker—the deckhands (who drive winches), the porters, the holdsmen, the bogey-drivers, the checkers (who are, in fact, clerks).

Officially, this is "the Control"; unofficially, it is "the Pens." Since "pens" is, however, felt to be derogatory to the dignity of labour, in the newest control buildings the rails have been replaced by black lines drawn upon the floor. But, such is the contrariness of human nature, the place is still very apt to be "the Pens."

At 12.50 the men's entrance door to the building was shut. Through the small window in the control officer's compartment at the end of the building, 1,100 men were to be seen, standing on their squares, awaiting their luck, shoulder to shoulder, ten or more deep.

The control officer announced, according to routine, the order of priority for the ships then in dock, determined by his head office. Then, one by one, the ship's foremen went out into the hall, moving between the squares, selecting their men. This they do by touching each man on the shoulder; the man then hands his book to the firm's timekeeper, following a step behind.

That, at least, is the theory of it. But if work is scarce or there are any "golden nuggets" about, foremen complain that it is apt to be the men who choose them rather than they the men. For "to break up the stand" to get the man you want, who may be wedged at the back, is frowned on in dockland.

"Gold Nuggets" are Saturday night jobs, bringing four hours' pay for one hour's work; the "Crown Jewels" are work after four o'clock on Sundays, similarly lucrative; the "Easy Six" is six hours' work for eight, with double-pay, on Sundays. Liverpool dockers watch their own particular market as carefully as stockbrokers and, long before a ship has reached Port Lynas, its probable dividends will have been fully canvassed via the "Galley Wireless."

The Liverpool docker, at least, is one man who needs no reminder of the importance of Britain's export trade. A recession in textiles, a cut in Australia's import licences, a budget crisis in South Africa, and the effect is instantly felt in his life. At one control point I visited, only twenty men were hired out of an entire hall full.

In the last year or so, indeed, a notable change in tempo has come to Liverpool's dockland. There has been much more "Working for the Queen" than mining of "Golden Nuggets." "Working for the Queen" means getting only a day or two's work a week, so that one could have drawn as much pay—the £4 8s. od. fall-back—without any work at all.

Unemployment's Ghost

But that is how it is, in normal times, in docking. "Twelve months ago," I was told, "we were running regular shortages of a thousand men. Now the surplus fluctuates, rising as high as 4,500." A good deal of this is necessary slack, which will be quickly taken up as trade improves.

But unemployment remains. Unemployment, like catarrh, is endemic in the Liverpool area. In the thirties, it reached 100,000. Even in 1950, during the period of "full employment," it never sank below 10,000. Today it fluctuates around 22,000.

Why does this ancient spectre continue to haunt so great and enterprising a commercial city? Partly because, great as it may be, it is not a *whole* city. It has not yet succeeded, as so much of Britain now has, in throwing off the cruel legacy of its Victorian past. It has a hard core of unemployables, men and women too feeble or ailing or feckless to do any worthwhile work, broken on Liverpool's wheel rather than sick from neatly certifiable diseases.

Partly, also, because Liverpool is a city washed by human as well as ocean tides. For several generations, it has been the goal of immigrants, rolling stones which sometimes gathered Liverpudlian moss, sometimes rolled on to the Argentine, the United States, or Canada (where there is a large Liverpool Club in Montreal to this day).

From out of their narrow mountain valleys the Welsh younger sons and daughters came. Spurred on by the great potato famine, the Irish crossed St. George's Channel on packed steamer decks for fourpence a head, dug Liverpool's ever advancing docks, and, barefooted, subsisting on gin and potatoes, settled down in Liverpool's innumerable dank cellars.

And, inevitably, the Scots came, and with their customary tenacity, infiltrated the city's police force, supplied craftsmen and engineers to the shipping lines and the shipyards, and established themselves in the shipping and merchant houses.

All these accents are still to be heard about Liverpool's streets through the rush-and-splutter of the native Liverpudlian's own unique amalgam. Some of the immigrants stayed on and "did well" as they say. Others went to the wall, losing all hope.

One Family, One Room

Both built their Liverpool—the Liverpool you behold from the topmost steps of the Picton Library in St. George's Plateau; and the Liverpool that overwhelms you like a fog as you stand on the pavements of Scotland Road, just around the corner. Great flat-blocks rise out of the murk, but struggle in vain against it. Chalk scrawls cover walls to waist-height.

Scotland Road is a mile long; but it is the heart, not the limit, of this wilderness. To the west, streets even more dismal fall away down to the docks and the culminating bleakness of the endless, stone-setted Docks Road. There are streets here where six families live in every house, a family to every room. Liverpool is a hard case: the hardest outside Glasgow.

And still the human tide washes the city, leaving its flotsam and jetsam behind it. Liverpool's immigrants come from farther afield than Tipperary, and are of colours other than white. Here are Russians and Norwegians and Poles, West Africans, Somalis, West Indians and Arabs. And here, in particular, is what is almost certainly Britain's biggest Chinatown.

Pitt Street, Liverpool's far-famed Chinese street, was more or less swept away in the bombing. But the Chinese, who are obstinate as well as enterprising, merely picked up what was left and moved across to Nelson Street and Great George Street, next door.

Now the dreariness of Nelson Street is lit up by the shop windows of Chinese grocers, by the Progress Club, headquarters of the local Kuomintang and, at the bottom, the munificent red neon-lit Far East Restaurant, the famed establishment of Mr. Kwok Fong, who, doubling a bamboo-shoot and bird's nest-importing business with the post of Alfred Holt's Chinese crews superintendent, might be called the chief compradore of Liverpool's Chinatown.

But the heart of Chinatown beats a hundred yards or so up the road, in a small public house called The Nook.

China In The Bar

To outward appearances, The Nook is just one more obscure side-street pub, like thousands of others. But push open the side door, and go in. Chinese seethe about you, Chinese of all sorts, shapes and sizes, talking away happily in half a dozen dialects. Chinese sailors from Singapore, Americanized Chinese with bright spotted bow ties, self-effacing Chinese laundrymen, rotund Chinese business men, leaning on an English bar, appearing, surrealistically, between English beer-pumps.

Presiding over this remarkable scene, behind the bar of what is probably the busiest pub in Liverpool, bustles a dark-eyed, matronly figure in a red jumper and little grey hat. This is Eileen Jones from Mallow, County Cork.

Mrs. Jones is a great admirer of the Chinese. "They're lovely boys," she says in the soft Irish brogue that has never left her. "Never the bit of trouble they give me."

Her admiration is returned. Chinese sailors, returning to Liverpool from the

distant places of the earth, make a bee-line for "Eileen's Bar," their England. They bring her presents from many lands. Her picture, painted Chinese style by a Chinese artist, looks down serenely from the wall.

"And if they're skint," explained a C.I.D. man, sitting in a corner, "they know 'Mamie' will pour out a glass for them all the same."

He introduced a Chinese named "George" who had come from Canton. "Nospik English, China come from!" said George, entering into the spirit of the thing. But, later, mellowing into fluent English, he observed suddenly: "Of course, you are a journalist . . . but position, fame, money, what do they get you? What good are they, my friend?"

Was it the lateness of the hour, or did Confucius hold sway in Liverpool still?

Not half a mile from Eileen's Bar, another Irishwoman presides over another pub, from the half-open door of which come not the high nasalities of Chinese song, but the stamping of feet and the beginnings of a calypso. "Rose's" is only one of several largely all-black pubs of Liverpool's Little Harlem.

Harlem's Black Tide

Liverpool's Harlem was born in the nineties when the Elder Dempster steamship line began to replace its white stokers by the much cheaper Africans. It set up a hostel for its African seamen at the corner of Stanhope Street, and St. James's Place and, in the fullness of time, these Africans, having tasted the joys of the Englishman's cities, left the sea, married white women, and settled down in the streets east and south of the hostel. More joined them.

Then, after the second World War came the West Indians, often as stowaways, sometimes working or paying their passages, British citizens leaving their own sunlit but desperately overcrowded islands to seek their fortunes in the centre of the Empire.

The black tide crept up the streets east and south of old Elder Dempster hostel. Houses were bought up by coloured landlords and, just as in New York's Harlem, the whites moved out. Fine old merchants' houses became dingy, fly-blown warrens, with half a dozen men camping in each room.

It is one of the ironies of history that the merchants who once lived in these fine houses made their fortunes by shipping Africans to the West Indies as slaves for the plantations there. Liverpool itself rose to fortune on the famous "triangle" trade: textiles and muskets and gee-gaws to West Africa; slaves from Africa on the Middle Passage to the West Indies; rum and molasses and sugar back to Liverpool. In 1807 when, much to Liverpool's dismay, the slave trade was abolished, 185 Liverpool vessels carried 49,313 slaves to the West Indies.

Bitter Human Problems

Now, a century and a half later, the descendants of those slaves are taking their revenge. For the growth of Little Harlem poses one of the bitterest human problems that has ever afflicted this city of bitter problems.

Half a dozen people in Liverpool worried about the iniquities of the slave trade. It is possible that a few more concern themselves with the problem of the slaves' descendants: but not many. One of these is a young man, named Charles Mougne, a former sailor who is now warden of Stanley House in Upper Parliament Street.

Stanley House is the community centre of a community that does not exist. Its object is to introduce Liverpool's blacks to Liverpool's whites as *human beings*—and Liverpool's blacks and browns to each other. For there are deep cleavages between them, too—between the frizzy-haired Somali sailors, dutifully labouring over their "English" homework at the Centre; the grinning, simple-minded West Africans; and the more sophisticated West Indians, no longer content to accept the white man's wisdom.

Three-quarters of Mougne's members—the best elements in the coloured population—are unemployed. Most of them have very little hope of ever getting steady jobs. A week's labouring here, a week there, every month or two, filling in gaps, seems the best they can hope for. Mougne writes endlessly to and fro to possible employers. But nearly always, from public authority or private employer, the answer is the same: a cold shoulder, sometimes accompanied by polite and sympathetic phrases, sometimes not. So, apathy steals over Stanley House. The apathy, says Mougne, can be terrible.

The apathy grows. The bitterness deepens. Quite simply, in geometric progression, the problem increases. For the black men marry. "The answer I would like to see is to get as many coloured girls over here as there are coloured boys," said Mougne. But, of course, that does not happen. So the black men take white wives. Immediately, the white girls become outcasts from their own community.

Liverpool is not cheerful. Though the city came through the blitzes, though the great port served Britain so well through the war, it may have been that when the Corn and Cotton Exchanges closed, when the lights went out finally in that free, rip-roaring old world in which Liverpool was conceived and grew, it may have been that then the living heart went out of this city and the Liverpool "gentlemen" handed in their checks to the Manchester "men."

"It's a treat to get away to Manchester and feel a bit of life," a Liverpool housewife said to me. "Liverpool," observed a citizen comprehensively, "is the most miserable city in the world."

Not that the Scousers are downhearted: for they are born and bred to desperation. They fight back. They keep their end up. They clutch at straws. This combativeness, this aggrieved protest, comes out even in their extraordinary accent with its rushing, rising inflexion, its slurred vowels and superfluous aspirates and adenoidal rattle, which is said to have developed here from the conjunction of the Welsh, the Irish—and a catarrhal climate.

In Liverpool you either see the funny side—or leave for Canada. But mostly you laugh; indeed, you giggle. And it is hardly remarkable that this place, this accent, this approach to living, has produced the richest vein of radio comics in the land, from the late Tommy Handley to the present Ted Ray, taking in on the way Arthur Askey and Robb Wilton.

Each morning, each evening, the population of the city pours through the Pier Head as the blood through the heart. There is a mighty rushing of feet on the floating landing stage; pouring from the downtown trams and buses the streams of office workers stampede down the long ramps, across the stage, and on to the impatient ferries.

This is one of the great ferry crossings of the world—only Hongkong's is busier. It was, indeed, the advent of the steam ferry that brought into being the dormitory towns of the Cheshire bank—Birkenhead, Wallasey, Seacombe, New Brighton and the rest.

Fierce Local Pride

But, whatever geography and common sense may dictate, in feeling the area obstinately divides into a string of fiercely independent townships, riven by local prides and jealousies. Thus, when the Mersey tunnel's great underwater roadway was planned, Wallasey and Bootle stayed resolutely out.

The tunnel's promise has been amply fulfilled. But, with their colours nailed firmly to the mast, the Wallasey ferries still bring the sound and smell of the sea to between eleven and fourteen million commuters each year. Custard and green, the Royal Iris comes dashing over from Seacombe and swings round to her place at the packed landing stage with a precision remarkable in one so bulky.

This remarkable vessel is Wallasey's latest gauge of battle, flung down before the Liverpudlian Goliath. Naturally, her maiden voyage in 1951 was a Merseyside event. It is a story in the best W. W. Jacobs tradition.

Just as in the China Seas pirates who capture junks come aboard in the guise of simple passengers, so on the day of the maiden voyage of the Royal Iris she harboured a party of "trippers" who presently produced notebooks and began to record the drinking habits of the passengers. The Liverpool police.

Challenge To Goliath

Goliath's challenge was joyfully accepted. Captain John Regan—a Liverpool Irishman who started working on the ferries as a boy thirty-three years ago—dispatched his master-at-arms to escort Liverpool's chief inspector to the bridge. Regan pointed out that, the vessel being at sea, he, as captain, was the law enforcement officer on board—and Liverpool's emissary was detained in the captain's cabin till the Royal Iris reached port.

The civic tournaments that followed in the Liverpool law courts went far towards filling the large books of press cuttings which Commander Price, R.N.R., the Wallasey Ferries' general manager, and designer of the Royal Iris, displays to admiring visitors as he rolls about his office quarter-deck hurling defiance at Liverpool.

From his offices above the Seacombe landing-stage, Commander Price looks out over the broad grey expanse of the Mersey to the long line of docks, the proud waterfront, the great city rising up towards the ridge. Below, the ferry bell rings, gangway chains rattle, the crowd comes pouring out on to the Cheshire shore. From this position, even David, still undaunted, may yet be permitted to feel some awe at Goliath's grandeur.

NEXT WEEK: The Big Boss system in Liverpool's everyday life

LIFE WITH FATHER

THE FIRST TIME I realized my father was famous was the day, when I was about six, that he was given an illuminated address at Stoke-on-Trent. I was very proud to see him being cheered, and felt very important at school next day, being his daughter. But I soon learned the disadvantages.

He would take me on Sundays to the stadium, where he was given a massage and I had a lemonade. But crowds of noisy boys always waylaid us. We cannot go anywhere, do anything in public, without a crowd being there, ready to pounce.

We have to slink into the cinema when the lights are out, park the car in back streets when we go to see people. My father has tried every ruse imaginable to trick the hordes, but he has never entirely succeeded.

A professional footballer has to keep fit in the summer. For some years Father ran a seaside hotel, but he sold it, and now he depends on my brother Stan and me to keep him fit. We cleared the orchard behind our house, planted grass seed and made a tennis court. Here we have some terrific games.

We also have a miniature football pitch, with miniature goals, and play with a rubber ball when a few of Daddy's friends come over on Sunday mornings, and we all help him to practise his dribbling. One of the visitors takes it very seriously. Once he tried so hard to get the ball from Daddy that he collapsed.

When my father and I go out together, he likes me to pretend I am his niece, in case people should think that, having a grown-up daughter of fourteen, he ought to retire from football. I could not imagine his ever giving it up, as he says he will play in the reserves when they no longer want him in the first eleven.

He lives for the game, and when other team members come over after a match, they talk about nothing else for four or five hours on end.

The first time I saw Daddy play I fell asleep. But I would not miss a match now. The trouble is I get so excited. At the last Cup-tie match against Tottenham the excitement was so intense that I came over all queer, and Mummy took me outside and gave me aspirin.

Waiting for a match to start is only just bearable if the wives and girl friends of the other players are there to talk to. And it is not so bad when we are losing; nothing can be done about that. But I simply can't endure the suspense of winning. I had given up all hope at Wembley and was only feeling terribly sad for Daddy, when we started winning, and I could not stop myself from crying.

Stan and I were with Charlie Chester's little boy that night, while my father and mother went to the banquet in London. We were looking at television, when to our great surprise Daddy came on in *Music Hall*; he and the rest of the team had been literally dragged away from their soup.

Their triumphant return home was the climax of Father's career. Whenever the train stopped, people crowded on to the platform. At Crewe, Tom Moss, the comedian, was waiting with his band to cheer the team with words he had written to "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

From Preston the rest of the journey was completed by coach. Stan and I went to meet Daddy on the promenade, not thinking we would have a chance of his seeing us in the crowd, but he did. He brought home a magnum of champagne given him by a fan.

The champagne is being kept for my twenty-first birthday, but seven years is a long wait, and anything could happen to a bottle of champagne in that time.

Who is the famous father? For his name, and the complete photograph, turn to page 39

ABOVE US THE WAVES

Continued from page 18

water tower when two German soldiers dismounted from a stationary lorry. There was no time for concealment, and equally no question of walking into the enemy's arms. The charioteers, as one man, turned to the tower and assumed the international and sacrosanct posture of men doing something against a wall. The Germans almost bumped into their backs, then, loyally observing a masculine freemasonry, apologized and passed on.

After this narrow escape the night became quite lively. Several sentries were successfully stalked, an Arab village was crossed, as also was an awe-inspiring anti-tank ditch. Its dimensions were less impressive than the half-sucked lemon that Larkin found on its farther lip. This they divided and ate, skin and all.

Chased By Angry Arab

They were now very hungry, and were reckless enough to enter a hovel in whose forecourt a few miserable chickens were huddling. Berey was about to garrot one of these when an avenging Arab appeared in the entrance to send him sprinting back to the road; he reached it in time to save Larkin from a large and savage dog. It was two very tired men that lay down to sleep, just after first light, under a bush near what was clearly another deserted lorry park.

It was not to be deserted for long. At ten o'clock Berey was awakened by the familiar sound of assembling vehicles. He peered about and saw what looked like a whole armoured column rolling off the road. Before the charioteers could devise a way of escape—and the expanse of camel thorn offered little prospect of that—the lorries had surrounded the area.

The Germans were setting up camp and, to Larkin's dismay, foraging parties detached themselves from the column with the obvious intention of gathering brushwood. The Germans were in boisterous spirits. With much joking and horseplay, they slowly tightened the ring round the hiding men. When the soldiers were almost on them, Larkin and Berey, from some absurd ostrich instinct, turned over on their bellies and buried their heads in the sand.

A powerful kick brought Larkin to his feet. What he then said must equal in glorious inadequacy the remark of Stanley on discovering the explorer Livingstone in the depths of the African jungle. Larkin smiled weakly. "Good afternoon," he said.

The German's eyes lit up. "Ha, Tommy!"

"No, no," Larkin protested. "Navy."

His captor did not believe him, but neither of the men thought the point worth arguing. They were captured.

Dangerous Evidence

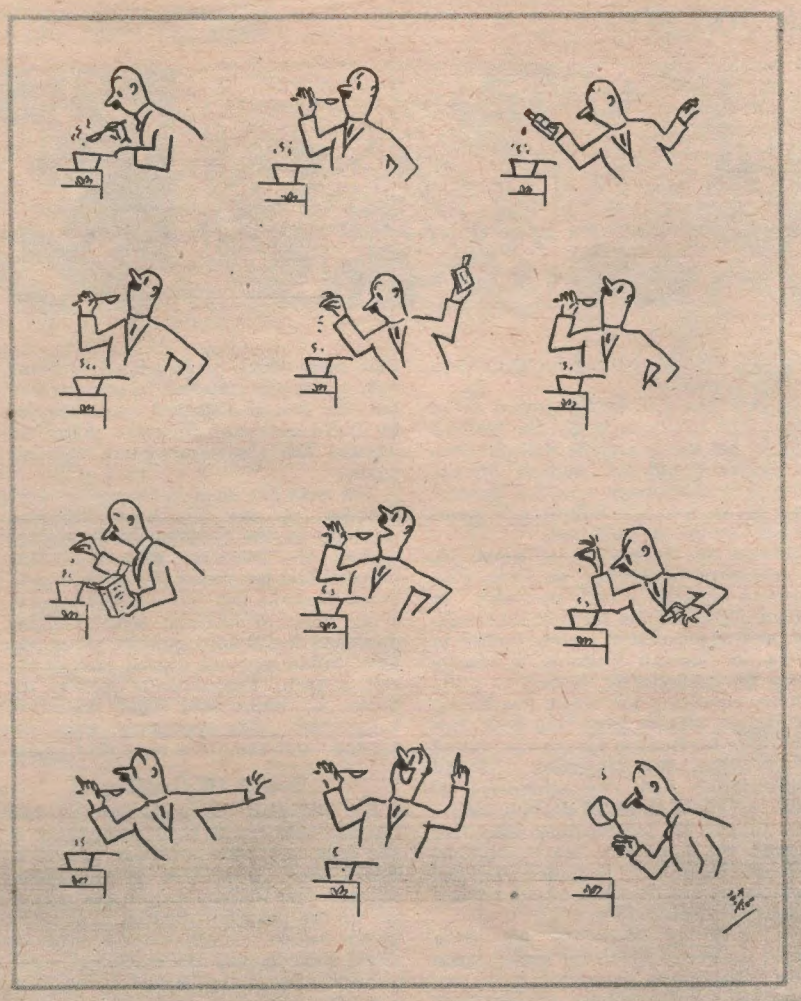
After a meal they were loaded into a lorry with an officer, a sergeant and two guards. Sitting in the back as they were jolted westwards, Larkin and Berey worried about the Italian cigarettes, false German identity papers and foreign currency concealed in their pockets. Such elaborate escape equipment could be embarrassing.

Luckily both smoked pipes. Under the pretence of getting up, knocking out and refilling these, they managed to get rid of the incriminating evidence over the tailboard of the lorry.

They passed that night—January 21—in an Italian settlement, under the guard of an Austrian sergeant. An amiable man, he observed the punctilio of playing host more seriously than he took the duties of guardian. He produced an excellent meal of fried Spam, black bread and acorn coffee. He expanded on the course of the war in a mixture of German, French, Italian and English. The Germans, he volunteered, were pulling out of Tripoli; in fact, they must have left the town by now.

Larkin pricked up his ears. Tripoli *kaput?*

"*Ja, ja. Kaput Tripoli. Kaput* the Africa Korps. *Kaput* everything," said the Austrian.



Larkin sang a German drinking song. The Austrian replied with a neat version of "Pack Up Your Troubles." He produced his wallet and the photographs of at least fifteen girls. "*Gut*, eh, that one? That one O.K." Larkin and Berey were fulsome in their praise. *Gut* indeed! What a fellow he was, the sergeant! By the time they all turned in it was clear that the enemy thought the charioteers the most charming prisoners imaginable.

Pretended To Sleep

Larkin and Berey lay down in the lorry and pretended to sleep. The sergeant slept by the tailboard, one of his men bedded down in front. Outside, two sentries wandered rather erratically round the vehicle. At about 4 a.m., while the sentries were chatting by the radiator, the prisoners collected some bread and water, made a bundle of their clothes, stepped over the snoring sergeant and dropped into the sand.

There was no alarm and they walked towards Tripoli till dawn, spending the day, this time undisturbed, in another copse by the side of the road. By midnight, they were in sight of the town. The sergeant had been right, Tripoli had been abandoned. Oily flames were rising from a hundred burning dumps, the road that had been so busy three days before stretched black and deserted in the moonlight.

But these signs of impending liberty were less interesting to the charioteers than the sight of an orange orchard abutting from a neat whitewashed farm. There, as they were gorging themselves, they were discovered by an ebullient Italian farmer with whom they passed their most comfortable night since leaving Malta.

The next morning their host harnessed a pony to a smart little trap and drove them to the town—and to an Eighth Army brigadier. Ten days later Larkin and Berey were boarding a submarine at Malta. But this time the destination was England.

On the same day that Larkin and Berey were preparing to leave Malta for home waters and a spell of shore leave, Stevens and Buxton were awaiting a very different kind of voyage. They were sitting, in company with eighty allied prisoners and 250 men of the French Foreign Legion, in the fetid forward hold of a small cargo ship anchored in Tunis harbour. The charioteers took the situation stoically; their journey to Tunis after they had been captured at Tripoli had prepared them to expect almost anything.

Shortly after they had been made prisoner, the charioteers were put in a three-ton lorry with twenty Italian soldiers and driven steadily westwards till dusk, when the truck pulled off the road into a patch of sand. In spite of heated protests—Buxton's were expressed in broad Derbyshire—the prisoners were made to pass the night chained together by the ankles under two thin groundsheets.

It was the coldest night they had ever experienced; it was made colder by the physical impossibility of any movement, for the slightest stretch of a leg caused the chains to cut painfully into their flesh. This unpleasant night was followed by three scarcely less so, spent in a camp near Sfax.

The party reached Tunis on January 26, and about a week later they were marched to the docks and battened down in the hold of the prison ship.

Vermin Scuttled About

Here they found they had to sleep on bare, hard and very dirty boards. The smell was sickening and several sorts of vermin scuttled up and down the lines of legs, for the prisoners were huddled as closely together as cells in a clot of spawn. Sanitary appliances were economical, two fifty-gallon drums being thought quite sufficient for the needs of 330 men. The drums were emptied when necessary by details of the Legion, a fatigue which demonstrated the traditional hardihood of this force.

After two days, the ship finally put to sea early on February 6. The sea was calm; this prevented seasickness but encouraged attack by British submarines. Stevens and Buxton passed the voyage wondering which of these twin threats would be less desirable: communal nausea or a torpedo amidships. However, Palermo was reached without incident early next morning.

After much counting and re-counting, a meal of macaroni and a couple of highly efficient air raids, the charioteers were sent by train via Messina and Naples to Campo 66 at Capua. There they were deloused and enjoyed their

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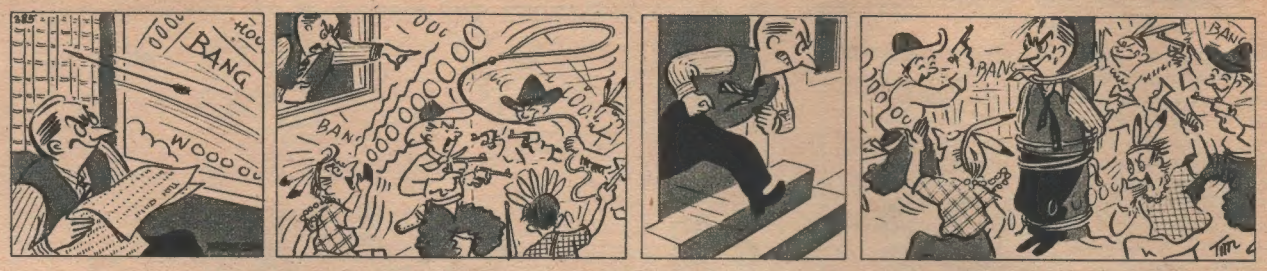

first bath since swimming for their lives in Tripoli harbour.

Buxton was still being treated as an officer, but after a fortnight the Italians realized his status and he was put into the warrant officers' section of the camp. The charioteers were not to meet again till early in the following September, in Campo 50, at Rome.

Buxton was transferred to Campo 50, an interrogation centre, in June. He showed himself little amenable to Italian questions. On his first interrogation he was accused of having landed in Africa in German uniform, a charge which he passionately denied.

After persisting for about two hours, the Italian officers gave him best, but unhappily for Buxton his morale proved greater than his discretion. Asked finally if he had any statement to make, he could think of nothing better than to ask his captors how they had enjoyed the late very heavy daylight raid on Rome. The joke was not appreciated and Buxton found himself in solitary confinement.

On July 25 Mussolini fell from power, an event which for some reason caused Buxton to be moved to an upstairs cell in the square of buildings that formed the camp. He was still on "solitary," but his new cell had one great advantage — outside windows. Through their bars he could look out on Rome, and it was then that the idea of escaping to Vatican City came into his head.

Rome itself was in an uneasy state; martial law had been proclaimed but there was some doubt as to which army held power. The Italians feared German reprisals, and the Germans an Italian uprising. Buxton, if only intellectually, thoroughly enjoyed this confusion, which favoured his attempt to get away.

Forced Prison Window

A handy man, like all submariners, he managed by laborious tapping with a stone to detach one of the iron legs of his bed from the rivet that held it to the wall. With this lever he soon succeeded in prising the window bars apart; better—one of the bars broke completely away from the cement. It made an unsightly hole in the wall, but Buxton was able to conceal this by hanging his pyjamas over the window during the twice-daily inspections of the cell. A way out had been found, but identity papers were needed. So was some method of negotiating the twenty-five foot drop from the window to the floor below.

He had fortunately kept a photograph of himself taken in another camp; using this he forged a fairly convincing German passport. From shreds of rope and twine collected from the yard while on exercise, and by joining strips torn from his clothing, he managed to produce twenty feet of reliable cord. On August 30, all was ready for the break-out.

At 9 p.m., when it was not quite dark, in order to be certain of the movements of the guards outside, he gently removed the loose bar and peered through—straight into a sentry's upturned face. A few hours later he was beginning a sentence of thirty days in a stinking, damp and lightless little dungeon where there was scarcely enough room to stand up straight.

Despite the traditional crust of bread and pot of water, foul air, rats, mice and other vermin, Buxton's morale was as resilient as ever. Because of his resolution, perhaps, the Italians relented after ten days and moved him upstairs again "for reasons of health." It was a large, hot room, similar to that from which he had tried to break out, but it was different in one particular—the cell it adjoined was occupied by Sub-Lieutenant Stevens. After six months the charioteers were together again.

The next five days in Campo 50 were peculiar, to say the least. Excited cheering on the morning of September 9 told the prisoners that something unusual had happened. From their windows, Buxton and Stevens had a gratifying view of German soldiers being disarmed by Italian guards. A garrulous Italian sergeant visited each of the cells in turn. Dramatically opening the doors, he announced that hostilities were over. The prisoners were delighted—but the doors were shut again.

Sound Of Gunfire

By nightfall the charioteers had German soldiers as their neighbours in the cells across the corridor. As if to shield them from this contaminating contact, the Italians moved the prisoners to the hospital building a hundred yards away. Gunfire could now be heard outside, and the crackle of small arms in the camp. Asked to explain, a sentry said that the Germans were attacking the city. He was reassuring: the Italians would hold it easily.

Buxton and Stevens were not so sure. They were even less so the next morning, when German troops were seen piling Italian arms and equipment in the hospital courtyard, and the Italians who had locked the Germans in twelve hours before were now being frogmarched into the prison themselves. The war was becoming very phoney.

The Italians, however, still seemed to be in charge of Allied prisoners in the camp, although all routine, including the issue of rations, had long since broken down. On September 12 the situation became too much for them and they advised the charioteers to make a dash for Vatican City. Stevens and Buxton asked for nothing better, but pointed out that battledress was hardly the thing in which to walk through a German-infested town. The Italian commandant saw the difficulty and promised to provide suitable clothing.

He was as good as his word. By the night of the 13th they were given two sets of Italian private soldier's uniform. Eight hours later, at 6 a.m. on the 14th, they slipped out of the camp gates, led by the garrulous sergeant.

Tramcar To Freedom

The Italian helped them to board the San Pietro tramcar, which, he said, would take them to the centre of the city. It would put them down, in fact, right in front of Saint Peter's itself. As to getting sanctuary in the Vatican, that was to be up to them.

Stevens still had some Italian currency from his escape pack; they had been told what the fare would be, and that Saint Peter's was the end of the journey. Greatly excited, and suppressing as best they could the hilarity of seeing each other wearing Italian uniform, they sat in the corner of the tram and kept silent. Stevens tendered the exact fare when the conductor came round; nobody gave them a second glance. In half an hour they stepped down into the great square that fronts the cathedral.

There were many German soldiers in the piazza; some were very clearly patrolling the entrance to the cathedral. Although it was still early the streets were crowded with people walking aimlessly to and fro. Buxton and Stevens, after a council of war, decided to inspect the gates of the Vatican; they strolled up to those that opened on to the motor drive.

Here they got their first shock: the gates were not only closed, but were heavily guarded by four solid-looking carabinieri. On the other side a group of Swiss guards strode about in their impressive Renaissance uniforms. An entry into papal territory was not going to be so easy after all.

The charioteers returned to the piazza and sat down on a bench. The crowd had increased and now people were entering the cathedral. After half an hour, in the hope of finding some way to the Vatican from inside the church, they entered themselves.

When they had recovered from the impact of Christendom's most grandiose interior, they branched off into a remote side chapel to get their bearings. There they knelt till sore knees drove them into the open once more. Soon Buxton spotted a confessional labelled "English," and they decided to wait near this until an English-speaking priest appeared.

It was more than an hour before a priest of any sort approached; he was a Spaniard, but had enough English to take in the situation when Stevens, tackling him boldly, told him their identity and explained their plight. The Spaniard pointed conspiratorially to two men talking together some yards away: one was a priest, the other an official of the British Legation.

The Courteous Stranger

The official told the charioteers that he would see the British Minister on their behalf; meanwhile they were to wait for his return in a certain side chapel. The chapel was beautiful, but Stevens and Buxton had almost exhausted its possibilities when, after three hours, a courteous stranger accosted them with the beguiling words: "Follow me."

The stranger led them to a gloomy alcove behind the High Altar. There he addressed them formally. "I am," he said, "the British Minister's butler. I am instructed to give you these."

"These" was a gift as surprising as it was welcome—two large ham sandwiches. The butler, whose name was Jack, told the charioteers that they must stay where they were and on no account leave the cathedral or allow themselves to be thrown out. Then he vanished.

Backing as far into the shadows of the alcove as possible, Buxton and Stevens chewed and waited. A man who might have been a verger—he had nothing official about him but a highly officious air—after looking at them sourly for several minutes, came up and asked them to leave. On the charioteers refusing to stir, he returned with six policemen who, after the Italian equivalent of the invitation to "come quietly," seized them by the arms. They were asked to remember where they were, but Stevens and Buxton knew very well where they were—a few yards from freedom.

The ceremonies over, the battle began. Kicking and heaving, letting out with their fists whenever an arm was free, they were dragged and almost carried from behind the High Altar. Nameless objects were sent flying, startled worshippers emerged from chapels, a choir stopped its practice to watch the struggle from its stand. But the charioteers fought grimly and the policemen had to be reinforced half way down the chancel.

Finally, with six men hanging on to each, the sailors were hurled through the great west door and on to the steps. There, in the midst of a considerable crowd, a squad of carabinieri

took them in charge. The battle of San Pietro was over.

Very dejected at being sunk when almost into port, the charioteers, still guarded and protesting, started down the famous steps. But diplomacy had not been idle; it now appeared in the form of the civilian from the legation. In a short, loud and authoritative phrase, this man made the carabinieri release them. Arm in arm they climbed the steps again, only to find that the gates of the cathedral had been shut.

They ran to a side door that led directly to the Vatican; a group of Swiss guards barred the way. This was critical, for the charioteers were in the open and German patrols were marching about the piazza. The civilian hurried away again and returned in fifteen minutes—with a pass to enter papal territory. They returned to Saint Peter's once more and, after a nervous wait in a chapel, were led at last to a guardroom inside the walls.

Guests Of The Pope

For the next nine months Stevens and Buxton were the guests of the Pope. They were excellently looked after. Civilian suits were made for them and they were allowed to move freely about the Vatican City. They had found four British escaped prisoners already installed; another six were smuggled in during their stay. One, a New Zealand lieutenant, entered concealed under a heap of cabbages in a food lorry.

Life was fairly social. There were dinners and luncheons at the British Legation and, on Christmas Day, 1943, Jack, the butler who had sustained the charioteers with ham sandwiches in Saint Peter's, now helped to serve turkey and plum pudding. There were paper caps and carol singing; the charioteers felt home-sick.

News of the war could be heard from the B.B.C.; in May, the sounds of the fighting on the Anzio beachhead did much to strengthen morale. The food situation in Rome became serious, but the charioteers in the Vatican continued to live as before. But better than any comfort was the sight, from the roof of the British Legation on June 4, of the German Army streaming out of Rome. In lorries and commandeered cars, in donkey carts and on bicycles, pushing anything on wheels from barrows to perambulators, the Wermacht trudged out of the city.

The next morning, very early, Buxton saw what they had all been waiting for—an American jeep in the piazza of Saint Peter's. He found Stevens and together they ran into the square. People were shouting and throwing flowers. They were free.

A month later they stepped from the troopship Orantes on to the pier at Greenock. They were not far from the waters in which, more than two years before, they had first learnt to climb astride a human torpedo.

It had been a long way home.

NEXT WEEK: The midget fleet sails to battle with Germany's capital ships

LIFE WITH FATHER

Here is the missing person from the photograph on page 36. He is Stanley Matthews, the soccer star, seen here with his daughter Jean.

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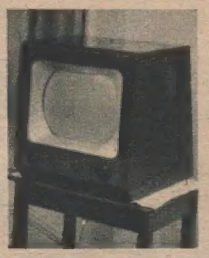

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For ten winners of £2 10s., see "*Bullets*" *Bulletin*. 50 *Bullets* Season Tickets and 1,500 "Good Shot" Prizes have also been posted.

RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit; the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

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4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests (in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated September 19, and in JOHN BULL dated September 26), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, September 12, for early news of *Bullets* No. 1,900 result.)

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Across Clues **XWORD 852**

1. A gardening job may be so hard as to make one do this
2. For opening these, in particular, steadiness is an asset
4. People can do this without attacking anyone
5. High one may be beyond reach of ordinary chap
8. Rogues naturally try to conceal theirs
9. Experienced hiker will rarely grumble about this
10. Adds to excitement experienced on racecourse
11. The idea of retiring on a pension one day is this to some men

Down Clues

1. It's all too easy to waste first-class material in one
2. In this country we aren't likely to think of these as connected with shooting of any kind
3. Anyone unused to the job may have some difficulty in folding
6. When one is crammed, Shakespeare will not be quite so enjoyable
7. May have nothing whatever to do with music, as some people are aware
8. A spy has got to be careful about drawing one
9. Landing a big one requires a share of luck, too

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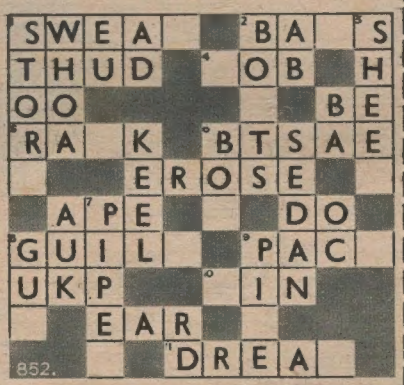
Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per contest and to entry equal to 16 Squares. Signature indicates agreement to Rules.



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Ah! Kensitas—that's Good!

No prize, alas! for him, but though
The judges' verdict was a blow
He still could smile and steal the show
With Kensitas—that's good!

(Kensitas—the fresher, smoother cigarette)

"Kensitas, for mellow, fine-tasting tobacco—the discerning smoker's choice."

OUR BELIEF, THE FINEST LEAF... KENSITAS—THAT'S GOOD!